

Fillmore Folk Tales

Selected for Young Folks by
WILHELMINA HARPER

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from
PARKER FILLMORE'S
"Mighty Mikko"
and
"The Laughing Prince"

With Illustrations and Decorations by
JAY VAN EVEREN



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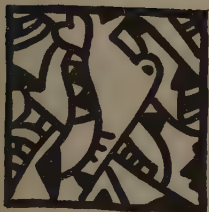
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THE ENCHANTED GROUSE



The Story of Helli and the Little Locked Box

THE ENCHANTED GROUSE



There was once an old couple who lived with their married son and his wife. The son's name was Helli. He was a dutiful son but his wife was a scold. She was always finding fault with the old people and with her husband and for that matter with everybody else as well.

One morning when she saw her husband taking out his bow and arrows she said:

"Where are you going now?"

"I'm going hunting," he told her.

"Isn't that just like you!" she cried. "You're going off to have a good time hunting and you don't give a thought to me who have to stay home alone with two stupid old people!"

"If I didn't go hunting," Helli said, "and shoot something, we'd have nothing to put in the pot for dinner and then you would have reason to scold."

At that the woman burst into tears.

"Of course, as usual blame me! Whatever happens it's my fault!"

Poor Helli hurried off, hoping that by the time he returned his wife would be in a calmer state of mind. He had small success with his hunting. He shot arrow after arrow but always missed his mark. Then when he had only one arrow left he saw a Grouse standing in some brushwood so near that there was little likelihood of his missing it.

He took good aim but before he could fire the Grouse said:

"Don't shoot me, brother! Take me home alive."

Helli paused, then he shook his head.

"I've got to shoot you for we've nothing to put in the pot for dinner."

Again he aimed his arrow and again the Grouse said:

"Don't shoot me, brother! Take me home alive."

For the second time Helli paused.

"I'd like to spare you," he said, "but what would my wife say if I came home empty-handed?"

He took aim again and a third time the Grouse said:

"Don't shoot me, brother! Take me home alive."

At that Helli dropped his arrow.

"I don't care what she says! I can't shoot a creature that begs so pitifully for its life! Very well, Mr.

Grouse, I'll do as you say: I'll take you home alive. But don't blame me if my wife wrings your neck."

He took the Grouse up in his arms and started homewards.

"Feed me for a year," the Grouse said, "and I'll reward you."

When they reached home and Helli's wife saw the Grouse, she cried out petulantly:

"Is that all you've got and out hunting all morning! That won't be dinner enough for four!"

"This Grouse isn't to be killed," Helli announced. "I'm going to keep it for a year and feed it."

"It won't take much to feed a Grouse," the old man remarked.

But the wife flew into a passion.

"What! Feed a useless bird when there isn't enough to feed your own flesh and blood!"

But Helli was firm and despite her threats his wife did not dare to maltreat the Grouse.

At the end of a year the Grouse grew a copper feather in its tail which it dropped in the dooryard. Then it disappeared.

"Ha!" laughed Helli's wife. "A copper feather! That's your reward for feeding that thankless bird a whole year! And now it's escaped!"

But the next day the Grouse returned.

"Feed me for another year," it said to Helli, "and I'll reward you."

His wife raised an awful to-do over this, but Helli was firm and for another year he fed and petted the Grouse.

At the end of the second year the Grouse grew a silver feather in its tail which it dropped in the doorway. Then it disappeared.

"One silver feather!" Helli's wife cried. "So that's all you get for feeding that thankless bird a whole year! And now it's escaped!"

But it hadn't. It returned the very next day.

"Feed me for another year," it said to Helli, "and I'll reward you."

At the end of the third year the Grouse grew a golden feather in its tail and when it dropped that in the doorway the scolding wife hadn't so much to say, for a golden feather was after all pretty good pay for a few handfuls of grain.

For a day the Grouse disappeared and then when it returned it said to Helli:

"Get on my back and I'll reward you."

Helli did so and the Grouse, rising high in the air, flew far away. On, on it flew until it reached the broad



On it flew until it reached the broad Ocean

Ocean. Over the Ocean it flew until Helli could see nothing but water in whatever direction he looked.

"Ha!" he said to himself with a shudder, "I hope I can hold on!"

As he spoke, the Grouse slipped from beneath him and he fell down, down, down. However, before he touched water the Grouse swooped under him and caught him up again high into the air. He had this same terrible experience a second time and a third time and each time he thought his last moment had arrived.

"Now," the Grouse told him, "you know what my feelings were when you threatened three times to shoot me with your arrow."

"You have taught me a lesson," Helli said.

After that the Grouse flew on and on. At last it said:

"Look straight ahead, master, and tell me what you see."

Helli shaded his eyes and looked.

"Far, far ahead I see what looks like a copper column."

"Good!" the Grouse said. "That is the home of my oldest sister. She will be overjoyed to see us and when she hears how you have spared my life she will want to make you a present and will offer you various

things. Take my advice and tell her that the only thing you want is her little locked box the key to which is lost. If she won't give you that, accept nothing."

The Grouse's oldest sister received them most hospitably and when she had heard their story at once offered Helli anything he might like from among her treasures.

"Then give me your little locked box the key to which is lost," Helli said.

The oldest sister shook her head.

"My little locked box! Who told you about that? I'm sorry, but I cannot give you that! Take anything else!"

"No," Helli said, "that or nothing!"

When the oldest sister could not be prevailed upon to give away her little locked box, the Grouse had Helli mount his back once more and off they flew.

"We'll visit my second sister now," he said. "If she offers you a present, ask her for her little locked box without a key and accept nothing else."

On, on they flew until the oldest sister's castle was far behind.

"Look, master," the Grouse said, "look straight ahead and tell me what you see."

Helli shaded his eyes and looked.

"Far ahead I see something that is like a silver cloud."

"That," said the Grouse, "is the silver castle of my second sister."

At the silver castle the second sister received them with joy and when she heard who Helli was at once declared that she wanted to show him her gratitude by making him a gift.

"Ask from me what you will," she said, "and you shall have it."

But when he asked for her little locked box without a key, she cried out:

"No! No! Not that! Anything else!"

"But I don't want anything else!" Helli said.

When the Grouse saw that his second sister was not to be parted from her little locked box, he bade Helli mount his back and off they flew again.

"We'll go to my youngest sister this time," he said. "If she offers you a present, ask for the same thing."

On, on they flew until the silver castle was lost to view.

"Now, master, look ahead and tell me what you see."

Helli shaded his eyes and looked.

"I seem to see a golden haze like the sun behind a cloud."

"That is the golden castle of my youngest sister."

They arrived and the youngest sister threw her arms about the Grouse for she loved him dearly and had not seen him for a long time.

"Welcome, brother!" she said. "And welcome also to you, Helli!"

Then she offered Helli a present and when he asked for her little locked box without a key she gave it to him at once.

"It is my most precious possession," she said, "but you may have it for you spared my dear brother's life when you might have taken it."

After they had rested and feasted they bade the youngest sister farewell and Helli with his precious box held tightly in one hand mounted the Grouse's back and off they flew towards home.

"Be careful of the box," the Grouse said, "and don't let it out of your hands until we reach some beautiful spot where you'd like always to live."

They passed high mountains and wooded lakes and fertile valleys.

"Shall we stop here?" the Grouse asked. "Or here? Or here?"

But always Helli said:

"No, not here."

At last they reached home and the Grouse told Helli that now they must part forever.

"By sparing my life three times," the Grouse said, "and then feeding me for three years you have broken the enchantment that bound me and now I shall not have to go about any longer as a grouse but shall be able to resume my natural shape. Farewell, Helli, and when you find the spot where you think you would like always to live, drop the box and you will find you have a treasure that will more than reward you for your kindness to me."

The Grouse disappeared and Helli said to himself:

"Where do I want to live always but right here at home with my dear old father and mother and my wife who is my wife even if she does scold me sometimes!"

So there at home after they all had supper together, he dropped the box on the floor. It broke and out of it arose a beautiful castle with servants and riches and everything that Helli had always wanted and never had. And Helli and his old father and mother and his wife lived in it and were happy. And gradually his wife got over her habit of scolding for when you're happy you haven't anything to scold about.

BEAUTY AND THE HORNS



The Story of an Enchanted Maiden

BEAUTY AND THE HORNS

THERE was once a rich man who when he was dying called his son to his bedside and said:

“Danilo, my son, I am leaving you my riches. The only thing I ask of you is this: close your ears to all reports of an enchanted maiden who is known as Peerless Beauty and when the time comes that you wish to marry choose for wife some quiet sensible girl of your native village.”

Now if the father had not mentioned Peerless Beauty all might have been well. Danilo might never have heard of her and after a time he would probably have fallen in love with a girl of his native village and married her. As it was, after his father's death he kept saying to himself:

“Peerless Beauty, the enchanted maiden of whom my father warned me! I wonder is she really as beautiful as all that! I wonder where she lives!”

He thought about her until he could think of nothing else.

“Peerless Beauty! Peerless Beauty! Oh, I must see this enchanted maiden even if it costs me my life!”

His father had a brother, a wise old man, who was supposed to know everything in the world.

"I will go to my uncle," the young man said. "Perhaps he will tell me where I can find Peerless Beauty."

So he went to his uncle and said:

"My dear uncle, my father as he lay dying told me about a wonderful maiden called Peerless Beauty. Can you tell me where she lives because I want to see her for myself and judge whether she is as beautiful as my father said."

His uncle looked at him gravely and shook his head.

"My poor boy, how can I tell you where that enchanted maiden lives when I know it would mean death to you if ever you saw her? Think no more about her but go, find some suitable maid in the village, and marry her like a sensible young man."

But his uncle's words, far from dissuading Danilo, only excited him the more.

"If my uncle knows where Peerless Beauty lives," he thought, "other men also know."

So one by one he went to all the old men in the village and asked them what they knew of Peerless Beauty. One by one they shook their heads and told him that Peerless Beauty was no maiden for him to be thinking about.

"Put her out of your mind," they said. "These enchanted maidens are a snare to young men. What you want to do is marry some quiet industrious girl here in the village and settle down like a sensible young man."

But the oftener Danilo heard this advice, the more firmly convinced he became that it was just what he did not want to do.

"Time enough to settle down after I've seen Peerless Beauty," he told himself. "She must be beautiful indeed, or all these old men would not be so anxious to keep me from seeing her. Well, if they won't tell me where she is, I'll go out in the world and find her for myself."

So he put on rich clothes as befitted his wealth, took a bag of the gold his father had left him, mounted his horse, and rode off into the world. Everywhere he went he made inquiries about Peerless Beauty and everywhere he found old men who knew about the enchanted maiden but would tell him nothing. Every one of them advised him to go home like a sensible young man and think no more about her. But all they said only made him the more determined to see the maiden for himself.

Finally one day as evening approached he came to

a little hut in the woods. At the door of the hut sat a poor old woman. She held out her hand as he passed and begged an alms. Danilo, being a kind hearted young man, gave her a gold piece.

“May God reward you!” the old woman said.

“Granny,” Danilo asked, “can you tell me the way to Peerless Beauty?”

“Aye, my son, that I can but he is a rash youth who seeks that maiden! It were better for you to turn back than to go on!”

“But I’m not going to turn back!” Danilo declared. “Whatever the outcome I’m going to find Peerless Beauty and see for myself why all men fear her.”

When the old woman saw that Danilo was determined, she gave up pleading with him and pointed out a faint trail in the forest which, she told him, would lead him to Peerless Beauty’s castle.

He slept that night in the old woman’s hut and early next morning set out on the forest trail. By afternoon he reached the castle.

“What do you want?” the guards demanded roughly.

“I want to see Peerless Beauty.”

“Have you gold?” they asked him.

Danilo showed them his bag of ducats.

They led him into a hall of the castle and told him to put his gold on a table. If he did so, perhaps Peerless Beauty would show herself and perhaps she wouldn't.

Danilo did as the guards directed and then faced a curtain behind which, they told him, Peerless Beauty was seated. The curtain opened a little, but instead of showing her face Peerless Beauty extended only one finger. However, that finger was so ravishingly beautiful that Danilo almost fainted with delight. He would have stayed gazing on that one enchanting finger for hours if the guards had not taken him roughly by the shoulders and thrown him out of the castle.

"Come again when you've got more gold!" they shouted after him.

Like a man in a dream Danilo rode back to the old woman's hut.

"Now, my son, are you satisfied?" she asked him. "Are you ready now to go home and settle down like a sensible young man?"

"Oh, granny!" Danilo raved. "Such a finger! I must see that finger again if it cost me my whole fortune!"

He slept that night in the old woman's hut and the next day returned to his native village. There he got

another bag of the golden ducats which his father had left him and at once started back to the castle of Peerless Beauty.

This time that heartless maiden stripped him again of his gold, showed him two of her enchanting fingers, and as before had her guards throw him out of the castle.

“Come again when you’ve got more gold!” they shouted after him.

That’s exactly what the poor young man did. He went back and back until the fortune that his father had left him was entirely squandered. And all he had seen of Peerless Beauty up to that time were the fingers of one hand! Shouldn’t you suppose that now with all his wealth lost he would get over his foolish infatuation? Well, he didn’t.

“I must go back again!” he kept telling himself.

His gold was gone but he still had his father’s house. It was a big old house with garrets and cellars.

“Perhaps if I hunt I shall find some treasures hidden away in odd corners,” Danilo said.

So he hunted upstairs and down. He opened old boxes and rummaged about among the dark rafters. One day he came upon a funny looking little cap.

“I wonder whose this was,” he thought to himself.

He went to a mirror and tried the cap on. Then a strange thing happened. The moment the cap touched his head, Danilo disappeared.

“Ah!” he cried, “it’s a magic cap and the moment I put it on I become invisible! Now I can slip into Peerless Beauty’s chamber and see her lovely face!”

With his magic cap pulled tightly down over his forehead, he set off once more for Peerless Beauty’s castle. Sure enough he was able to pass unseen the guards at the gate, he was able to go boldly into the great hall, and beyond it through the curtain into Peerless Beauty’s own chamber.

The Beauty was seated with her back to the curtain and a serving maid was combing out her hair for the night. It was lovely hair and it fell down over Beauty’s shoulders like a mantle of gold. At mere sight of it Danilo was so overcome with emotion that he sighed.

“What’s that?” Beauty cried. “There’s some one in my chamber!”

The serving maid looked under the bed and behind the chairs and in the corners.

“There’s no one here, my lady.”

“That’s strange!” Beauty said. “I feel as though some one were looking at me.”

When Danilo saw the actual face of the enchanted maiden, it was all he could do to keep from crying aloud. She was so unutterably beautiful that he almost swooned away in ecstasy.

Presently the maiden went to bed and fell into an uneasy sleep. The light of a single candle shed a faint radiance over her face making it lovelier than ever. Through all the long hours of night Danilo stood perfectly still, gazing at her, afraid almost to breathe lest he should disturb her.

“Unless I win her for wife,” he thought to himself, “I shall nevermore be happy!”

When morning came the maiden awoke with a start and said:

“There’s some one looking at me! Who is it? Who is it?”

“It’s only your poor Danilo,” a voice answered.

“Danilo? Who is Danilo?”

“The youth whom you have been treating so cruelly. But though you have treated me cruelly, I love you still!”

“If you love me still,” the maiden said, “let me see you.”

Danilo took off the magic cap and there he stood, a handsome youth, at the foot of her bed. Then the

crafty maiden spoke him fair and Danilo told her about the magic cap, and when she said to him that she repented having treated him so cruelly and asked him to let her see the cap, the poor young man was so dazzled by her beauty and her seeming kindness that he handed it to her at once.

Instantly she clapped it on her head and disappeared. Then she laughed in derision and called out loudly to the guards:

“Ho, there! Take out this young man and drive him forth! Let him return when he has another treasure to offer me!”

So the guards dragged Danilo out and drove him away.

With no more gold, with no more magic cap, Danilo returned to his father's house.

“Perhaps there are other treasures hidden away,” he thought. “I'll search further.”

In his search he came upon an old pitcher and thinking it might be silver he began rubbing it. Instantly there was a clap of thunder and a company of soldiers appeared. Their captain saluted Danilo respectfully and said:

“We are the servants of that magic pitcher. What does our master wish?”

“ Magic pitcher? ” stammered Danilo. “ And am I your master? ”

“ Yes, ” said the captain, “ you are our master as long as you hold the magic pitcher in your hands. ”

“ You may disappear now, ” Danilo said. “ I will rub the pitcher when I need you. ”

Delighted with this unexpected good fortune, he hurried off to the woods to the hut of the old woman who had befriended him before. He showed her the pitcher and demonstrated for her how it worked. Then he asked her to carry a message to Peerless Beauty.

“ Tell her, ” he said, “ that unless she consents to marry me at once I’ll lead a mighty army against her, take her captive, and then send her off in exile to that howling wilderness which people call the Donkeys’ Paradise. ”

“ I will deliver your message, ” the old woman said, “ on condition that you promise me to be on your guard this time. Don’t let the maiden trick you again. She is under an enchantment that makes her cruel and crafty and the enchantment will never be broken until she meets a man upon whom her wiles have no effect. ”

“ Trust me this time, ” Danilo said. “ I’ve had my lesson. ”

So the old woman delivered the message and when

Peerless Beauty received it with scorn, Danilo at once set out for the castle with the magic pitcher in his hand. He began rubbing and every time he rubbed a company of soldiers appeared. Soon the castle was surrounded by a great army and in fright and dismay Peerless Beauty sent out word that she was ready to make an unconditional surrender.

When Danilo entered the castle he found her humble and meek.

“I have treated you cruelly,” she said. “Now I am in your power, do with me what you will.” And she began weeping softly until the sight of her tears drove Danilo distracted.

“Weep no more, dear lady!” he cried. “You have nothing to fear from me! I love you! I am your slave!”

The Peerless one slowly dried her tears.

“If you love me as you say you do, you will tell me by what magic you have raised this great army.”

Then Danilo, forgetting the old woman’s warning, took the magic pitcher out of his shirt and showed the maiden how it worked.

“Ah!” she murmured wonderingly. “It looks like any old pitcher! Please, Danilo, let me see it in my own hands.”

Danilo handed her the pitcher and, quick as a flash, she rubbed it. There was a clap of thunder, a company of soldiers appeared, and their captain saluting her respectfully said:

“What does the mistress of the pitcher want?”

“Nay!” cried Danilo, “it is I who own the pitcher, not she!”

“We are the servants,” the captain said, “of whoever holds the pitcher.”

At that Peerless Beauty laughed loud and scornfully until the castle rang with her merriment.

“Seize that wretch!” she said, pointing to Danilo. “Tie his hands and drive him out in exile to the Donkeys’ Paradise! Let him stay there until he has another treasure to present me!”

So they drove Danilo out to the wilderness and left him there.

He wandered about for many days hungry and thirsty, subsisting on roots and berries, and having for drink only the water that collected in the hoof prints of the wild beasts.

“See what I’ve come to!” he cried aloud. “Why didn’t I heed the old woman’s warning! If I had, I should have broken the evil enchantment that binds my Peerless Beauty and all would have been well!”

One day as he wandered about he came upon a vine that was laden with great clusters of luscious red grapes. He fell upon them ravenously and ate bunch after bunch. Suddenly he felt something in his hair and lifting his hands he found that horns had grown out all over his head.

“Fine grapes these are!” he exclaimed, “to bring out horns on a person’s head!”

However, he was so hungry that he kept on eating until his head was one mass of horns.

The next day he found a vine that had clusters of white grapes. He began eating the white grapes and he hadn’t finished a bunch before the horns all fell off his head.

“Ha!” he said. “The red grapes put horns on and the white grapes take them off! That’s a trick worth knowing!”

He took some reeds and fashioned two baskets one of which he filled with red grapes and the other with white grapes. Then staining his face with the dark juice of a leaf until he looked brown and sunburned like a countryman, he went back to Peerless Beauty’s castle. There he marched up and down below the Peerless one’s window crying his wares like a huckster:

“Sweet grapes for sale! Who wants my fresh sweet grapes!”

Now it was not the season for grapes, so Peerless Beauty when she heard the cry was surprised and said to her serving maid:

“Go quickly and buy me some grapes from that huckster and mind you don’t eat one yourself!”

The serving maid hurried out to Danilo and he sold her some of the red grapes. As she carried them in, she couldn’t resist the temptation of slipping a few into her mouth. Instantly some horns grew out on her head.

“That’s to punish me for disobeying my mistress!” the poor girl cried. “Oh, dear, what shall I do?”

She was afraid to show herself to Peerless Beauty, so she pretended she was taken sick and she went to bed and pulled the sheet over her head and sent in the grapes by another serving maid.

Peerless Beauty ate them all before she discovered their frightful property. Then there was a great to-do, and cries of anger and of fright, and a quick sending out of the guards to find the huckster. But the huckster had disappeared.

What could Peerless Beauty do now? She tried to

pull the horns out but they wouldn't come. She tried to cut them off but they resisted the edge of the sharpest knife. She was too proud to show herself with horns, so she swathed her head with jewels and ribbons and pretended she was wearing an elaborate head-dress.

Then she sent heralds through the land offering a huge reward to any one who could cure her serving maid of some strange horns that had grown out on her head. You see she thought if she could get hold of some one who would cure the maid, then she could make him cure her, too.

Well, doctors and quacks and all sorts of people came and tried every kind of remedy, but all in vain. The horns stayed firmly rooted.

A whole week went by and when the last of the quacks had come and gone, Danilo, disguised as an old physician, presented himself and craved audience with the Peerless one. He carried two small jars in his hands one of which was filled with a conserve made from the white grapes and the other with a conserve made from the red grapes.

Peerless Beauty, her horns swathed in silk and gleaming with jewels, received him coldly.

"Are you one more quack?" she asked.

“Not a quack,” he said, bowing low, “but a man who has happened upon a strange secret of nature. I can cure your serving maid of her horns provided she confess to me all her misdeeds and hand over to me anything she has that does not belong to her.”

Peerless Beauty had him shown to the room where the serving maid lay in bed. The poor frightened girl at once confessed that she had stolen a few of her mistress’s grapes and eaten them. Danilo spoke kindly to her, gave her some of the white grape conserve, and as soon as she had tasted it the horns of course dropped off.

Thereupon Peerless Beauty led Danilo to her own chamber, ordered all her people out, and then acknowledged that she, too, was suffering from horns.

“I am sure I can cure you,” Danilo told her, “provided you confess to me all your misdeeds and hand over to me whatever you have that belongs to some one else.”

“I cheated a foolish young man out of five bags of gold,” Peerless Beauty said. “Here they are in this chest. Take them.”

Danilo opened the chest and took out his own five bags of gold.

“Is that all?” he asked.



The Magic Pitcher

"Yes, that is all."

Danilo gave her some of the red grape conserve and of course, instead of the horns already on her head falling off, more grew on.

"You're not telling me the truth," Danilo said, "and I can't cure you. There's no use my treating you further."

He turned to go and Peerless Beauty, in great fright, begged him to stay.

"I do remember another misdeed," she confessed. "I took by trickery a magic pitcher from the same foolish young man."

She gave Danilo the pitcher and he hid it in his shirt.

"Is that all?"

"Yes, that is all."

Danilo gave her some more of the red grape conserve and, of course, more horns grew out on her head. Then he pretended to get angry.

"How can you expect to be cured when you don't tell me the truth? I told you I could not cure you unless you confessed all!"

Peerless Beauty wanted much to keep the magic cap but when the strange physician thundered and scowled and threatened again to leave her, more horned than

ever, she acknowledged that she had taken the cap, too, and handed it over.

This time Danilo gave her some of the white grape conserve and as soon as she had eaten it all the horns fell off and her head shimmered and shone as of old with her beautiful hair.

Then Danilo told her who he was and at once the maiden sought to ensnare him again with her wiles.

“What a wonderful man you are, Danilo! I could love you now if you loved me, but I know of course that you will never love me again after the cruel way I have treated you!”

“But I do love you!” Danilo cried. “I do love you!”

“No, you don’t!” she said, and she pretended to weep. “If you did love me, you’d tell me where you found those red grapes and what this magic conserve is made of. But of course you don’t love me enough to tell me.”

Because she looked more beautiful than ever with the tears on her lovely cheeks, Danilo was about to tell her what she wanted to know when he remembered the old woman’s warning. That was enough. He hardened his heart and declared:

“No! I’ll never tell you! Do you hear me: I’ll never tell you!”

She wept and implored him and used all her wiles, but Danilo remembering the past was firm. And presently he had the reward that a man always has when he’s firm, for as soon as it was evident that she could no longer befool him, the evil enchantment that bound her broke with a snap and Peerless Beauty became a human maiden as gentle and sweet and loving as she was beautiful.

She knelt at Danilo’s feet and humbly begged his pardon and promised, if he would still marry her, to make him the most dutiful wife in the world.

So Danilo married Peerless Beauty and with the servants of the magic pitcher transported her and her castle and her riches together with the old woman who had befriended them both to his own native village. There he still lives happy and prosperous.

His uncle and all the old men in the village take credit to themselves for the success of his adventures.

“It is due entirely to us,” they tell any one who will listen to them, “that Danilo went out in search of Peerless Beauty in the first place. When he came to us and asked our advice we said to him: ‘Go, by all means! You’re young and brave and of course you’ll

win her!’ If we hadn’t urged him to go, he would probably have settled down here at home, married some quiet village girl, and never be heard of again!”

That’s how the old men talk now, but we know what they really did say at the time!

Yet after all that doesn’t matter. All that matters is that Danilo and Peerless Beauty love each other and are happy.



THE BEAR SAYS *NORTH*





THE BEAR SAYS *NORTH*



One day while Osmo, the Bear, was prowling about the woods he caught a Grouse.

"Pretty good!" he thought to himself. "Wouldn't the other animals be surprised if they knew old Osmo had

caught a Grouse!"

He was so proud of his feat that he wanted all the world to know of it. So, holding the Grouse carefully in his teeth without injuring it, he began parading up and down the forest ways.

"They'll all certainly envy me this nice plump Grouse," he thought. "And they won't be so ready

to call me awkward and lumbering after this, either!"

Presently Mikko, the Fox, sauntered by. He saw at once that Osmo was showing off and he determined that the Bear would not get the satisfaction of any admiration from him. So he pretended not to see the Grouse at all. Instead he pointed his nose upwards and sniffed.

"Um! Um!" grunted Osmo, trying to attract attention to himself.

"Ah," Mikko remarked, casually, "is that you, Osmo? What way is the wind blowing to-day? Can you tell me?"

Osmo, of course, could not answer without opening his mouth, so he grunted again hoping that Mikko would have to notice why he couldn't answer. But the Fox didn't glance at him at all. With his nose still pointed upwards he kept sniffing the air.

"It seems to me it's from the South," he said. "Isn't it from the South, Osmo?"

"Um! Um! Um!" the Bear grunted.

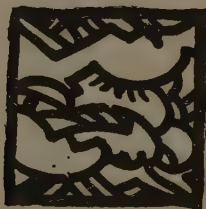
"You say it is from the South, Osmo? Are you sure?"

"Um! Um!" Osmo repeated, growing every moment more impatient.

"Oh, not from the South, you say. Then from what direction is it blowing?"



*Of course the instant
he opened his mouth the
Grouse flew away*



By this time the Bear was so exasperated by Mikko's interest in the wind when he should have been admiring the Grouse that he forgot himself, opened his mouth, and roared out:

"North!"

Of course the instant he opened his mouth, the Grouse flew away.

"Now see what you've done!" he stormed angrily. "You've made me lose my fine plump Grouse!"

"I?" Mikko asked. "What had I to do with it?"

"You kept asking me about the wind until I opened my mouth—that's what you did!"

The Fox shrugged his shoulders.

"Why did you open your mouth?"

"Well, you can't say, 'North!' without opening your mouth, can you?" the Bear demanded.

The Fox laughed heartily.

"See here, Osmo, don't blame me. Blame yourself. If I had had that Grouse in my mouth and you had asked me about the wind, I should never have said, 'North!' "

"What would you have said?" the Bear asked.

Mikko, the rascal, laughed harder than ever. Then he clenched his teeth and said:

"East!"

THE BEST WISH



The Story of Three Brothers and an Angel

THE BEST WISH

THERE were once three brothers whose only possession was a pear tree. They took turns guarding it. That is to say while two of them went to work the third stayed at home to see that no harm came to the pear tree.

Now it happened that an Angel from heaven was sent down to test the hearts of the three brothers. The Angel took the form of a beggar and approaching the pear tree on a day when the oldest brother was guarding it, he held out his hand and said:

“In heaven’s name, brother, give me a ripe pear.”

The oldest brother at once handed him a pear, saying:

“This one I can give you because it is mine, but none of the others because they belong to my brothers.”

The Angel thanked him and departed.

The next day when the second brother was on guard he returned in the same guise and again begged the charity of a ripe pear.

“Take this one,” the second brother said. “It is

mine and I can give it away. I can't give away any of the others because they belong to my brothers."

The Angel thanked the second brother and departed.

The third day he had exactly the same experience with the youngest brother.

On the following day the Angel, in the guise of a monk, came to the brothers' house very early while they were still all at home.

"My sons," he said, "come with me and perhaps I can find you something better to do than guard a single pear tree."

The brothers agreed and they all started out together. After walking some time they came to the banks of a broad deep river.

"My son," the Angel said, addressing the oldest brother, "if I were to grant you one wish, what would you ask?"

"I'd be happy," the oldest brother said, "if all this water was turned into wine and belonged to me."

The Angel lifted his staff and made the sign of the cross and lo! the water became wine from great wine-presses. At once numbers of casks appeared and men filling them and rolling them about. A huge industry sprang up with sheds and storehouses and wagons and



The Angel Took the Form of a Beggar

men running hither and thither and addressing the oldest brother respectfully as "Master!"

"You have your wish," the Angel said. "See that you do not forget God's poor now that you are rich. Farewell."

So they left the oldest brother in the midst of his wine and went on farther until they came to a broad field where flocks of pigeons were feeding.

"If I were to grant you one wish," the Angel said to the second brother, "what would you ask?"

"I'd be happy, father, if all the pigeons in this field were turned to sheep and belonged to me."

The Angel lifted his staff, made the sign of the cross, and lo! the field was covered with sheep. Sheds appeared and houses and women, some of them milking the ewes and others skimming the milk and making cheeses. In one place men were busy preparing meat for the market and in another cleaning wool. And all of them as they came and went spoke respectfully to the second brother and called him, "Master!"

"You have your wish," the Angel said. "Stay here and enjoy prosperity and see that you do not forget God's poor!"

Then he and the youngest brother went on their way.

"Now, my son," the Angel said, "you, too, may make one wish."

"I want but one thing, father. I pray heaven to grant me a truly pious wife. That is my only wish."

"A truly pious wife!" the Angel cried. "My boy, you have asked the hardest thing of all! Why, there are only three truly pious women in all the world! Two of them are already married and the third is a princess who is being sought in marriage at this very moment by two kings! However, your brothers have received their wishes and you must have yours, too. Let us go at once to the father of this virtuous princess and present your suit."

So just as they were they trudged to the city where the princess lived and presented themselves at the palace looking shabby and travel-stained.

The king received them and when he heard their mission he looked at them in amazement.

"This makes three suitors for my daughter's hand! Two kings and now this young man all on the same day! How am I going to decide among them?"

"Let heaven decide!" the Angel said. "Cut three branches of grape-vine and let the princess mark each branch with the name of a different suitor. Then let

her plant the three branches to-night in the garden and to-morrow do you give her in marriage to the man whose branch has blossomed during the night and by morning is covered with ripe clusters of grapes."

The king and the two other suitors agreed to this and the princess named and planted three branches of grape-vine. In the morning two of the branches were bare and dry, but the third, the one which was marked with the name of the youngest brother, was covered with green leaves and ripe clusters of grapes. The king accepted heaven's ruling and at once led his daughter to church where he had her married to the stranger and sent her off with his blessing.

The Angel led the young couple to a forest and left them there.

A year went by and the Angel was sent back to earth to see how the three brothers were faring. Assuming the form of an old beggar, he went to the oldest brother who was busy among his wine-presses and begged the charity of a cup of wine.

"Be off with you, you old vagabond!" the oldest brother shouted angrily. "If I gave a cup of wine to every beggar that comes along I'd soon be a beggar myself!"

The Angel lifted his staff, made the sign of the cross,

and lo! the wine and all the winepresses disappeared and in their place flowed a broad deep river.

“In your prosperity you have forgotten God’s poor,” the Angel said. “Go back to your pear tree.”

Then the Angel went to the second brother who was busy in his dairy.

“Brother,” the Angel said, “in heaven’s name, I pray you, give me a morsel of cheese.”

“A morsel of cheese, you lazy good-for-nothing!” the second brother cried. “Be off with you or I’ll call the dogs!”

The Angel lifted his staff, made the sign of the cross, and lo! the sheep and the dairy and all the busy laborers disappeared and he and the second brother were standing there alone in a field where flocks of pigeons were feeding.

“In your prosperity you have forgotten God’s poor,” the Angel said. “Go back to your pear tree!”

Then the Angel made his way to the forest where he had left the youngest brother and his wife. He found them in great poverty living in a mean little hut.

“God be with you!” said the Angel still in the guise of an old beggar. “I pray you in heaven’s name give me shelter for the night and a bite of supper.”

“We are poor ourselves,” the youngest brother said.

"But come in, you are welcome to share what we have."

They put the old beggar to rest at the most comfortable place beside the fire and the wife set three places for the evening meal. They were so poor that the loaf that was baking in the oven was not made of grain ground at the mill but of pounded bark gathered from the trees.

"Alas," the wife murmured to herself, "it shames me that we have no real bread to put before our guest."

Imagine then her surprise when she opened the oven and saw a browned loaf of wheaten bread.

"God be praised!" she cried.

She drew a pitcher of water at the spring but when she began pouring it into the cups she found to her joy that it was changed to wine.

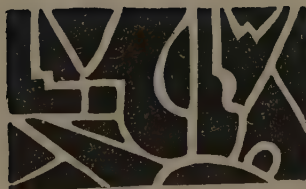
"In your happiness," the Angel said, "you have not forgotten God's poor and God will reward you!"

He raised his staff, made the sign of the cross, and lo! the mean little hut disappeared and in its place arose a stately palace full of riches and beautiful things. Servants passed hither and thither and addressed the poor man respectfully as "My lord!" and his wife as "My lady!"

The old beggar arose and as he went he blessed them both, saying:

“God gives you these riches and they will be yours to enjoy so long as you share them with others.”

They must have remembered the Angel's words for all their lives long they were happy and prosperous.



THE FOREST BRIDE



The Story of a Little Mouse Who Was a Princess

THE FOREST BRIDE



There was once a farmer who had three sons. One day when the boys were grown to manhood he said to them:

“My sons, it is high time that you were all married. To-morrow I wish you to go out in search of brides.”

“But where shall we go?” the oldest son asked.

“I have thought of that, too,” the father said. “Do each of you chop down a tree and then take the direction in which the fallen tree points. I’m sure that each of you if you go far enough in that direction will find a suitable bride.”

So the next day the three sons chopped down trees. The oldest son’s tree fell pointing north.

“That suits me!” he said, for he knew that to the north lay a farm where a very pretty girl lived.

The tree of the second son when it fell pointed south.

“That suits me!” the second son declared thinking of

a girl that he had often danced with who lived on a farm to the south.

The youngest son's tree—the youngest son's name was Veikko—when it fell pointed straight to the forest.

"Ha! Ha!" the older brothers laughed. "Veikko will have to go courting one of the Wolf girls or one of the Foxes!"

They meant by this that only animals lived in the forest and they thought they were making a good joke at Veikko's expense. But Veikko said he was perfectly willing to take his chances and go where his tree pointed.

The older brothers went gaily off and presented their suits to the two farmers whose daughters they admired. Veikko, too, started off with brave front but after he had gone some distance in the forest his courage began to ebb.

"How can I find a bride," he asked himself, "in a place where there are no human creatures at all!"

Just then he came to a little hut. He pushed open the door and went in. It was empty. To be sure there was a little mouse sitting on the table, daintily combing her whiskers, but a mouse of course doesn't count.

"There's nobody here!" Veikko said aloud.

The little mouse paused in her toilet and turning towards him said reproachfully:

"Why, Veikko, I'm here!"

"But you don't count. You're only a mouse!"

"Of course I count!" the little mouse declared. "But tell me, what were you hoping to find?"

"I was hoping to find a sweetheart."

The little mouse questioned him further and Veikko told her the whole story of his brothers and the trees.

"The two older ones are finding sweethearts easily enough," Veikko said, "but I don't see how I can off here in the forest. And it will shame me to have to go home and confess that I alone have failed."

"See here, Veikko," the little mouse said, "why don't you take me for your sweetheart?"

Veikko laughed heartily.

"But you're only a mouse! Whoever heard of a man having a mouse for a sweetheart!"

The mouse shook her little head solemnly.

"Take my word for it, Veikko, you could do much worse than have me for a sweetheart! Even if I am only a mouse I can love you and be true to you."

She was a dear dainty little mouse and as she sat looking up at Veikko with her little paws under her chin and her bright little eyes sparkling Veikko liked her more and more.

Then she sang Veikko a pretty little song and the song

cheered him so much that he forgot his disappointment at not finding a human sweetheart and as he left her to go home he said:

"Very well, little mouse, I'll take you for my sweetheart!"

At that the mouse made little squeaks of delight and she told him that she'd be true to him and wait for him no matter how long he was in returning.

Well, the older brothers when they got home boasted loudly about their sweethearts.

"Mine," said the oldest, "has the rosiest reddest cheeks you ever saw!"

"And mine," the second announced, "has long yellow hair!"

Veikko said nothing.

"What's the matter, Veikko?" the older brothers asked him, laughing. "Has your sweetheart pretty pointed ears or sharp white teeth?"

You see they were still having their little joke about foxes and wolves.

"You needn't laugh," Veikko said. "I've found a sweetheart. She's a gentle dainty little thing gowned in velvet."

"Gowned in velvet!" echoed the oldest brother with a frown.

"Just like a princess!" the second brother sneered.

"Yes," Veikko repeated, "gowned in velvet like a princess. And when she sits up and sings to me I'm perfectly happy."

"Huh!" grunted the older brothers not at all pleased that Veikko should have so grand a sweetheart.

"Well," said the old farmer after a few days, "now I should like to know what those sweethearts of yours are able to do. Have them each bake me a loaf of bread so that I can see whether they're good housewives."

"Mine will be able to bake bread—I'm sure of that!" the oldest brother declared boastfully.

"So will mine!" chorused the second brother.

Veikko was silent.

"What about the Princess?" they said with a laugh. "Do you think the Princess can bake bread?"

"I don't know," Veikko answered truthfully. "I'll have to ask her."

Of course he had no reason for supposing that the little mouse could bake bread and by the time he reached the hut in the forest he was feeling sad and discouraged.

When he pushed open the door he found the little mouse as before seated on the table daintily combing

her whiskers. At sight of Veikko she danced about with delight.

"I'm so glad to see you!" she squeaked. "I knew you would come back!"

Then when she noticed that he was silent she asked him what was the matter. Veikko told her:

"My father wants each of our sweethearts to bake him a loaf of bread. If I come home without a loaf my brothers will laugh at me."

"You won't have to go home without a loaf!" the little mouse said. "I can bake bread."

Veikko was much surprised at this.

"I never heard of a mouse that could bake bread!"

"Well, I can!" the little mouse insisted.

With that she began ringing a small silver bell, *tinkle, tinkle, tinkle*. Instantly there was the sound of hurrying footsteps, tiny scratchy footsteps, and hundreds of mice came running into the hut.

The little Princess mouse sitting up very straight and dignified said to them:

"Each of you go fetch me a grain of the finest wheat."

All the mice scampered quickly away and soon returned one by one, each carrying a grain of the finest wheat. After that it was no trick at all for the Prin-

cess mouse to bake a beautiful loaf of wheaten bread.

The next day the three brothers presented their father the loaves of their sweethearts' baking. The oldest one had a loaf of rye bread.

"Very good," the farmer said. "For hardworking people like us rye bread is good."

The loaf the second son had was made of barley.

"Barley bread is also good," the farmer said.

But when Veikko presented his loaf of beautiful wheaten bread, his father cried out:

"What! White bread! Ah, Veikko now must have a sweetheart of wealth!"

"Of course!" the older brothers sneered. "Didn't he tell us she was a Princess? Say, Veikko, when a Princess wants fine white flour, how does she get it?"

Veikko answered simply:

"She rings a little silver bell and when her servants come in she tells them to bring her grains of the finest wheat."

At this the older brothers nearly exploded with envy until their father had to reprove them.

"There! There!" he said. "Don't grudge the boy his good luck! Each girl has baked the loaf she knows how to make and each in her own way will probably make a good wife. But before you bring them home

to me I want one further test of their skill in housewifery. Let them each send me a sample of their weaving."

The older brothers were delighted at this for they knew that their sweethearts were skilful weavers.

"We'll see how her ladyship fares this time!" they said, sure in their hearts that Veikko's sweetheart, whoever she was, would not put them to shame with her weaving.

Veikko, too, had serious doubts of the little mouse's ability at the loom.

"Whoever heard of a mouse that could weave?" he said to himself as he pushed open the door of the forest hut.

"Oh, there you are at last!" the little mouse squeaked joyfully.

She reached out her little paws in welcome and then in her excitement she began dancing about on the table.

"Are you really glad to see me, little mouse?" Veikko asked.

"Indeed I am!" the mouse declared. "Am I not your sweetheart? I've been waiting for you and waiting, just wishing that you would return! Does your father want something more this time, Veikko?"

"Yes, and it's something I'm afraid you can't give me, little mouse."

"Perhaps I can. Tell me what it is."

"It's a sample of your weaving. I don't believe you can weave. I never heard of a mouse that could weave."

"Tut! Tut!" said the mouse. "Of course I can weave! It would be a strange thing if Veikko's sweetheart couldn't weave!"

She rang the little silver bell, *tinkle, tinkle, tinkle*, and instantly there was the faint *scratch-scratch* of a hundred little feet as mice came running in from all directions and sat up on their haunches awaiting their Princess' orders.

"Go each of you," she said, "and get me a fiber of flax, the finest there is."

The mice went scurrying off and soon they began returning one by one each bringing a fiber of flax. When they had spun the flax and carded it, the little mouse wove a beautiful piece of fine linen. It was so sheer that she was able when she folded it to put it into an empty nutshell.

"Here, Veikko," she said, "here in this little box is a sample of my weaving. I hope your father will like it."

Veikko when he got home felt almost embarrassed for he was sure that his sweetheart's weaving would shame his brothers. So at first he kept the nutshell hidden in his pocket.

The sweetheart of the oldest brother had sent as a sample of her weaving a square of coarse cotton.

"Not very fine," the farmer said, "but good enough."

The second brother's sample was a square of cotton and linen mixed.

"A little better," the farmer said, nodding his head. Then he turned to Veikko.

"And you, Veikko, has your sweetheart not given you a sample of her weaving?"

Veikko handed his father a nutshell at sight of which his brothers burst out laughing.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" they laughed. "Veikko's sweetheart gives him a nut when he asks for a sample of her weaving."

But their laughter died as the farmer opened the nutshell and began shaking out a great web of the finest linen.

"Why, Veikko, my boy!" he cried, "however did your sweetheart get threads for so fine a web?"

Veikko answered modestly:

"She rang a little silver bell and ordered her servants

to bring her in fibers of finest flax. They did so and after they had spun the flax and carded it, my sweetheart wove the web you see."

"Wonderful!" gasped the farmer. "I have never known such a weaver! The other girls will be all right for farmers' wives but Veikko's sweetheart might be a Princess! Well," concluded the farmer, "it's time that you all brought your sweethearts home. I want to see them with my own eyes. Suppose you bring them to-morrow."

"She's a good little mouse and I'm very fond of her," Veikko thought to himself as he went out to the forest, "but my brothers will certainly laugh when they find she is only a mouse! Well, I don't care if they do laugh! She's been a good little sweetheart to me and I'm not going to be ashamed of her!"

So when he got to the hut he told the little mouse at once that his father wanted to see her.

The little mouse was greatly excited.

"I must go in proper style!" she said.

She rang the little silver bell and ordered her coach and five. The coach when it came turned out to be an empty nutshell and the five prancing steeds that were drawing it were five black mice. The little mouse seated herself in the coach with a coachman mouse on

the box in front of her and a footman mouse on the box behind her.

“Oh, how my brothers will laugh!” thought Veikko.

But he didn’t laugh. He walked beside the coach and told the little mouse not to be frightened, that he would take good care of her. His father, he told her, was a gentle old man and would be kind to her.

When they left the forest they came to a river which was spanned by a foot bridge. Just as Veikko and the nutshell coach had reached the middle of the bridge, a man met them coming from the opposite direction.

“Mercy me!” the man exclaimed as he caught sight of the strange little coach that was rolling along beside Veikko. “What’s that?”

He stooped down and looked and then with a loud laugh he put out his foot and pushed the coach, the little mouse, her servants, and her five prancing steeds—all off the bridge and into the water below.

“What have you done! What have you done!” Veikko cried. “You’ve drowned my poor little sweetheart!”

The man thinking Veikko was crazy hurried away.

Veikko with tears in his eyes looked down into the water.

“You poor little mouse!” he said. “How sorry I am



She beckoned to Veikko

that you are drowned! You were a faithful loving sweetheart and now that you are gone I know how much I loved you!"

As he spoke he saw a beautiful coach of gold drawn by five glossy horses go up the far bank of the river. A coachman in gold lace held the reins and a footman in pointed cap sat up stiffly behind. The most beautiful girl in the world was seated in the coach. Her skin was as red as a berry and as white as snow, her long golden hair gleamed with jewels, and she was dressed in pearly velvet. She beckoned to Veikko and when he came close she said:

"Won't you come sit beside me?"

"Me? Me?" Veikko stammered, too dazed to think. The beautiful creature smiled.

"You were not ashamed to have me for a sweetheart when I was a mouse," she said, "and surely now that I am a Princess again you won't desert me!"

"A mouse!" Veikko gasped. "Were you the little mouse?"

The Princess nodded.

"Yes, I was the little mouse under an evil enchantment which could never have been broken if you had not taken me for a sweetheart and if another human being had not drowned me. Now the enchantment is

broken forever. So come, we will go to your father and after he has given us his blessing we will get married and go home to my kingdom."

And that's exactly what they did. They drove at once to the farmer's house and when Veikko's father and his brothers and his brothers' sweethearts saw the Princess' coach stopping at their gate they all came out bowing and scraping to see what such grand folk could want of them.

"Father!" Veikko cried, "don't you know me?"

The farmer stopped bowing long enough to look up.

"Why, bless my soul!" he cried, "it's our Veikko!"

"Yes, father, I'm Veikko and this is the Princess that I'm going to marry!"

"A Princess, did you say, Veikko? Mercy me, where did my boy find a Princess?"

"Out in the forest where my tree pointed."

"Well, well, well," the farmer said, "where your tree pointed! I've always heard that was a good way to find a bride."

The older brothers shook their heads gloomily and muttered:

"Just our luck! If only our trees had pointed to the forest we, too, should have found princesses instead of plain country wenches!"

But they were wrong: it wasn't because his tree pointed to the forest that Veikko got the Princess, it was because he was so simple and good that he was kind even to a little mouse.

Well, after they had got the farmer's blessing they rode home to the Princess' kingdom and were married. And they were happy as they should have been for they were good and true to each other and they loved each other dearly.



SUSAN WALKER,
WHAT A TALKER!



SUSAN WALKER, WHAT A TALKER!



There was once a man whose wife was an awful talker. Her name was Susanna. No matter how important it was to keep a matter quiet, if Susanna knew about it, she just had to talk. She was always running to the neigh-

bors and exclaiming:

“Oh, my dear, have you heard so and so?”

Her husband was an industrious fellow. He set nets in the river, he snared birds in the forest, and he worked at any odd jobs that came along.

It happened one day while he was out in the forest that he found a buried treasure.

“Ah!” he thought to himself, “now I can buy a little farm that will keep me and Susanna comfortable the rest of our days!”

He started home at once to tell his wife the good fortune that had befallen them. He had almost reached home when he stopped, suddenly realizing that the first thing Susanna would do would be to spread the news

broadcast throughout the village. Then of course the government would get wind of his find and presently officers of the law would come and confiscate the entire treasure.

"That would never do," he told himself. "I must think out some plan whereby I can let Susanna know about the treasure without risking the loss of it."

He puzzled over the matter for a long time and at last hit upon something that he thought might prove successful.

In his nets that day he had caught a pike and in one of his snares he had found a grouse. He went back now to the river and put the bird in the fishnet, and then he went to the woods and put the fish in the snare. This done he went home and at once told Susanna about the buried treasure which was going to be the means of making their old age comfortable.

She flew at once into great excitement.

"La! La! A buried treasure! Whoever heard of such luck! Oh, how all the neighbors will envy us when they hear about it! I can hardly wait to tell them!"

"But they mustn't hear!" her husband told her. "You don't want the officers of the law coming and taking it all from us, do you?"

"That would be a nice how-do-you-do!" Susanna cried. "What! Come and take our treasure that you found yourself in the forest?"

"Yes, my dear, that's exactly what they'd do if once they heard about it."

"Well, you can depend upon it, my dear husband, not a soul will hear about it from me!"

She shook her head vigorously and repeated this many times and then tried to slip out of the house on some such excuse as needing to borrow a cup of meal from a neighbor.

But the man insisted on her staying beside him all evening. She kept remembering little errands that would take her to the houses of various neighbors but each time she attempted to leave her husband called her back. At last he got her safely to bed.

Early next morning, before she had been able to talk to any one, he said:

"Now, my dear, come with me to the forest and help me to carry home the treasure. On the way we'd better see if we've got anything in the nets and the snares."

They went first to the river and when the man had lifted his nets they found a grouse which he made Susanna reach over and get. Then in the woods he let her make the discovery of a pike in one of the snares.

She was all the while so excited about the treasure that she hadn't mind enough left to be surprised that a bird should be caught in a fishnet and a fish in a birdsnare.

Well, they found the precious treasure and they stowed it away in two sacks which they carried home on their backs. On the way home Susanna could scarcely refrain from calling out to every passerby some hint of their good fortune. As they passed the house of Helmi, her dearest crony, she said to her husband:

"My dear, won't you just wait here a moment while I run in and get a drink of water?"

"You mustn't go in just now," her husband said. "Don't you hear what's going on?"

There was the sound of two dogs fighting and yelping in the kitchen.

"Helmi is getting a beating from her husband," the man said. "Can't you hear her crying? This is no time for an outsider to appear."

All that day and all that night he kept so close to Susanna that the poor woman wasn't able to exchange a word with another human being.

Early next morning she escaped him and ran as fast as her legs could carry her to Helmi's house.

"My dear," she began all out of breath, "such a



They carried home the treasure on their backs

wonderful treasure as we've found but I've sworn never to whisper a word about it for fear the government should hear of it! I should have stopped and told you yesterday but your husband was beating you—"

"What's that?" cried Helmi's husband who came in just then and caught the last words.

"It's the treasure we've found!"

"The treasure? What are you talking about? Begin at the beginning."

"Well, my old man and me we started out yesterday morning and first we went to the river to see if there was anything in the nets. We found a grouse—"

"A grouse?"

"Yes, we found a grouse in the nets. Then we went to the forest and looked in the snares and in one we found a pike."

"A pike!"

"Yes. Then we went and dug up the treasure and put it in two sacks and you could have seen us yourself carrying it home on our backs but you were too busy beating poor Helmi."

"I beating poor Helmi! Ho! Ho! Ho! That is a good one! I was busy beating my wife while you were getting birds out of fishnets and fish out of snares! Ho! Ho! Ho!"

"It's so!" Susanna cried. "It is so! You were so beating Helmi! And you sounded just like two dogs fighting! And we did so carry home the treasure!"

But Helmi's husband only laughed the harder. That afternoon when he went to the Inn he was still laughing and when the men there asked him what was so funny he told them Susanna's story and soon the whole village was laughing at the foolish woman who found birds in fishnets and fish in snares and who thought that two yelping dogs were Helmi and her husband fighting.

As for the treasure that wasn't taken any more seriously than the grouse and the pike.

"It must have been two sacks of turnips they carried home on their backs!" the village people decided.

The husband of course said nothing and Susanna, too, was soon forced to keep quiet for now whenever she tried to explain people only laughed.

THE LITTLE LAME FOX



*The Story of the Youngest Brother Who Found the Magic
Grape-Vine and Married the Golden Maiden*

THE LITTLE LAME FOX

THERE was once a wealthy farmer who had three sons. The oldest was a selfish overbearing fellow. The second was a weak chap who always did everything his brother suggested. The youngest whose name was Janko was not as bright and clever as his brothers but he was honest and, moreover, he had a good heart and in this world a good heart, you know, is more likely to bring its owner happiness than wicked brains.

“That booby!” the oldest brother would say whenever he saw Janko. And the second would snicker and repeat the ugly word, “Booby!”

The father was proud of his three sons and happy to see them grow up strong and healthy.

“They’re good boys,” he’d say to himself, “and I’m a fortunate father.”

Now there was one very curious thing about this farmer that nobody understood. One of his eyes was always laughing and the other was always weeping.

“What’s the matter with your father’s eyes?” people used to ask the sons.

The sons didn’t know any more than any one else.

One day they were in the garden discussing the matter among themselves.

“Why don’t we just go and ask him?” Janko suggested.

“If anybody is to ask him, I will!” declared the oldest brother importantly.

So he went indoors to his father and said:

“Father, people are forever talking about your eyes. Now I wish you would tell me why one of them is always laughing and the other always weeping.”

“My eyes, indeed!” cried the farmer, and in a rage he snatched up a knife and hurled it straight at his son. The young man dodged aside and fled and the knife stuck in the door jamb.

All out of breath the oldest brother returned to the others but of course he was ashamed to tell them what had happened. So he said to them:

“If you want to know what’s the matter with father’s eyes, you’ll have to ask him yourselves.”

So the second brother went in to the farmer and he had exactly the same experience. When he came out he gave his older brother a wink and said to Janko:

“Now it is your turn, Booby. Father is waiting for you.”

So Janko went in to his father and said:

"You have told my brothers why one of your eyes is always laughing and the other always weeping. Now please tell me for I, too, want to know."

In a rage the farmer snatched up the knife again and lifted his arm to hurl it. But Janko stood perfectly still. Why should he turn and run away as though he had done something wrong? He had only asked his father a civil question and if his father did not wish to answer it, he could tell him so.

The farmer when he saw that the boy was not to be frightened smiled and laid the knife aside.

"Thank God," he said, "I have one son who is not a coward! I have been waiting these many years to have my sons ask me this very question. My right eye laughs because God has blessed me and made me rich and has allowed my three sons to grow to manhood, strong and healthy. My left eye weeps because I can never forget a Magic Grape-Vine which once grew in my garden. It used to give me a bucket of wine every hour of the twenty-four! One night a thief came and stole my Magic Vine and I have never heard of it since. Do you wonder that my left eye weeps at the memory of this wonderful Vine? Alas, the bucket of wine that used to flow out of it every hour of the day and night—I have never tasted its like since!"

“Father,” Janko said, “dry your weeping eye! I and my brothers will go out into the world and find your Magic Grape-Vine wherever it is hidden!”

With that Janko ran out to his brothers and when they heard what he had to say they laughed and called him, “Booby!” and asked him didn’t he suppose that they had already planned to do just this thing. Of course they hadn’t, but they were so jealous and ill-natured that they couldn’t bear the thought of his being the first to suggest anything.

“We mustn’t lose any more time,” Janko said.

“It doesn’t matter how much time you lose, Mr. Booby! As for us we two are going to start out tomorrow at sunrise.”

“But, brothers,” Janko begged, “please let me go, too!”

“No!” they told him shortly. “You can stay home and look after the farm!”

But their father when he heard the discussion said, no, Janko was also to go as he was the bravest of them all. After that the brothers, because they didn’t want their father to tell how they had been afraid and run away, had to agree.

So the next morning early the three of them started out, each with a wallet well-stocked with food.

"How are we going to get rid of the Booby?" the second one whispered.

"Trust me!" the oldest one whispered back with a wink.

Presently they came to a crossroads where three roads branched. Now the oldest brother knew that after a short distance two of the roads came together again. So he motioned the second brother slyly that he was to take the middle road. Then he said:

"Brothers, let us part here and each take a different road. Do you agree?"

"Yes," the other two said, "we agree."

"Then suppose Janko take the left-hand road."

"And I'll take the middle road," the second cried.

"And I," the eldest said, "will take the one that's left. So farewell, brothers, and let us meet here in a year's time."

"God bless us all," Janko called out, "and grant that one of us may find our dear father's Magic Grape-Vine."

The two older brothers of course met in a short time when their roads joined and they had a good laugh to think how they had outwitted the Booby.

"Time enough to look for that old Grape-Vine when we've had a little fun!" the eldest said. "Let us sit

down here and eat a bite and then push on to the next village. There's an inn there where we can try our luck at cards."

So they sat down by the roadside, opened their wallets, and laid out some bread and cheese. Just then a Little Lane Fox came limping up on three feet, and whimpering and fawning it begged for something to eat.

"Get out!" bawled the older brother and the second, picking up a handful of stones, threw them at the Fox.

The little animal shied and then came timidly back, again begging for something to eat.

"Let's kill it!" cried one of the brothers.

They both jumped up and tried to strike the little creature with their sticks. The Fox limped off and they followed, hitting at it as they ran and always just missing it. It was so weak and lame that they expected every minute to overtake it and so kept on chasing it until it had led them pretty far into the woods. Then suddenly it disappeared and there was nothing left for the brothers to do but make their way back to the roadside grumbling and cursing. In their absence some shepherd dogs had found their open wallets and eaten all their food. So now they really had something to curse about.

Janko meanwhile had been trudging along steadily on the third road. At last when he began to feel hungry, he sat down by the wayside and opened his wallet. Instantly the same Little Lane Fox came limping up and whimpered and fawned and begged for something to eat.

“You poor little creature,” Janko said, “are you hungry?”

He held out his hand coaxingly and the animal gave it a timid sniff.

“Of course I’ll give you something to eat,” Janko said. “There’s enough for both of us.”

With that he divided his bread and cheese and gave the Little Fox half. Then they ate together and the Little Fox allowed Janko to pat her head.

When they finished eating the Fox sat up on her haunches and said:

“Now, Janko, tell me about yourself. Who are you and where are you going?”

The Fox seemed such a sensible little person that it didn’t surprise Janko in the least to have her sit up and talk. Janko’s brothers would have said that he hadn’t sense enough to be surprised. But he had a good heart, Janko had, and as you’ll soon hear a good heart is a much better guide for conduct than wicked brains.

Janko answered the Fox simply and truthfully. He told about his father and his two brothers and about his father's weeping eye and the Magic Grape-Vine for which he and his brothers were gone in search.

"You've been good to me," the Little Fox said. "You've shared your bread with me and that makes us friends. So from now on if you'll be a brother to me, I'll be a little sister to you."

Goodness knows Janko's own brothers weren't very good to him, but Janko understood what the Little Fox meant and he agreed.

"Well then, brother," the Fox said, "I know where that Grape-Vine is and I'm going to help you to get it. If you do just as I say I don't believe you'll have any trouble. Now take hold of my tail and away we'll go."

So Janko took hold of the Little Fox's tail and sure enough away they went. Whether they sailed through the air or just ran fleetly along the ground I don't know. But I do know that they went a great distance and that when they stopped Janko didn't feel in the least tired or breathless.

"Now, my brother," the Little Fox said, "listen carefully to what I tell you. The king of this country has a wonderful garden. In the midst of it your

father's Grape-Vine is planted. We are close to the garden now. It is protected by twelve watches each of which is composed of twelve guards. To get to the Grape-Vine you will have to pass them all. Now as you approach each watch look carefully. If the eyes of all the guards are open and staring straight at you, have no fear. They sleep with their eyes open and they won't see you. But if their eyes are closed, then be careful for when their eyes are closed they are awake and ready to see you. You will find the Grape-Vine in the very center of the garden. Standing near it you will see two spades, a wooden spade and a golden spade. Take the wooden spade and dig up the Vine as quickly as you can. Under no condition touch the golden spade. Now, Janko, do you understand?"

Yes, Janko thought he understood. He slipped into the garden and the first thing he saw were twelve fierce looking guards who were staring at him with great round eyes. He was much frightened until he remembered that the Little Fox had said that if their eyes were open they were fast asleep. So he picked up courage and walked straight by them and sure enough they didn't see him. He passed watch after watch in the same way and at last reached the center of the garden. He saw the Grape-Vine at once. There was no

mistaking it for at that very moment it was pouring out wine of itself into a golden bucket. Near it were two spades. Janko in great excitement snatched up the first that came to his hand and began to dig. Alas, it was the golden spade and as Janko drove it into the earth it sent out a loud ringing sound that instantly woke the guards. They came running from all directions with their eyes tightly closed for now, of course, they were awake. They caught Janko and dragged him to the king to whom they said:

“A thief! A thief! We found him trying to steal your Magic Grape-Vine!”

“My Magic Grape-Vine!” thundered the king. “Young man, what do you mean trying to steal my Magic Grape-Vine?”

“Well, you see,” Janko answered simply, “the Grape-Vine really belongs to my father. It was stolen from him years ago and ever since then his left eye has wept over the loss of it. Give me the Vine, O king, for if you don’t I shall have to come back and try again to steal it for it belongs to my father and I have sworn to get it!”

The king frowned in thought and at last he said:

“I can’t give away my precious Grape-Vine for nothing, young man, but I tell you what I’ll do: I’ll give

it to you provided you get for me the Golden Apple-Tree that bears buds, blossoms, and golden fruit every twenty-four hours."

With that Janko was dismissed and turned out of the garden.

The Little Fox was waiting for him and Janko had the shame of confessing that he had forgotten the warning about the golden spade and had been caught.

"But the king says he will give me the Grape-Vine provided I get for him the Golden Apple-Tree that bears buds, blossoms, and golden fruit every twenty-four hours."

"Well, brother," the Little Fox said, "you were good to me, so I'll help you again. Take hold of my tail and away we'll go."

Janko took hold of the Little Fox's tail and away they went a greater distance than before. In spite of going so quickly it took them a long time but whether it was weeks or months I don't know. Whichever it was when they stopped Janko didn't feel in the least tired or breathless.

"Now, brother," the Little Fox said, "here we are in another country close to the king's garden where the Golden Apple-Tree grows. To reach it you will have to pass twenty-four watches of twelve guards each.

Take care that you pass each guard as before when his eyes are wide open and staring straight at you for that means he is asleep. When you reach the Golden Apple-Tree you will see two long poles on the ground—a wooden pole and a golden pole. Take the wooden pole and beat down some of the golden fruit. Don't touch the golden pole. Remember!"

So Janko crept into the second garden and succeeded in passing all the guards of the twenty-four watches when their eyes were wide open and staring straight at him. He reached the Golden Apple-Tree and saw at once the two long poles that were lying near it on the ground. Now whether because he was excited or because he forgot what the Fox said—he had a good heart, Janko had, but he was a little careless sometimes—I don't know. But I do know that instead of taking the wooden pole as the Fox had told him, he took the golden pole. At the first stroke of the golden pole against the golden branches of the tree, the golden branches sent out a loud clear whistle that woke all the sleeping guards. Every last one of them came running to the Apple-Tree and in no time at all they had captured poor Janko and carried him to their master, the king.

"Trying to steal my Golden Apple-Tree, is he?"

roared the king in a great rage. "What do you want with my Golden Apple-Tree, young man?"

"Well, you see," Janko answered simply, "I have to have the Golden Apple-Tree to exchange it for the Magic Grape-Vine that really belongs to my father. It was stolen from him years ago and ever since then his left eye has wept over the loss of it. Give me the Golden Apple-Tree, O king, for if you don't I shall have to come back and try again to steal it."

The king seemed impressed with Janko's words for after a moment he said:

"Janko, I can't give you the Golden Apple-Tree for nothing, but I tell you what I'll do: I'll let you have it provided you get for me the Golden Horse that can race around the world in twenty-four hours."

With that Janko was dismissed and turned out of the garden.

As usual the Little Fox was waiting for him and again Janko had the shame of confessing that he had forgotten the warning about the golden pole and had been caught.

"But the king says he will give me the Golden Apple-Tree provided I get him the Golden Horse that can race around the world in twenty-four hours. I wonder, dear Little Fox, will you help me again?"

“Yes, brother, I will help you again for you were good to me. Take hold of my tail and away we’ll go.”

So Janko took hold of the Little Fox’s tail and away they went. How far they went and how long they were gone I don’t know, but it was a great distance and a long time. However they arrived without feeling in the least tired or breathless.

“Now, brother,” the Little Fox said, “this time listen carefully to what I tell you. Here we are in another kingdom close to the king’s own stable where the Golden Horse is guarded by thirty-six watches of twelve guards each. When night comes you must slip into the stable and pass all those guards when they are asleep with their eyes wide open and staring straight at you. When you reach the Golden Horse you will see hanging beside him a golden bridle and a common bridle made of hempen rope. Slip the hempen bridle over the Horse’s head and lead him quietly out of the stable. But mind you don’t touch the golden bridle! This time don’t forget!”

Janko promised faithfully to remember what the Little Fox said and when night came he crept into the stable and cautiously made his way through the sleeping guards. He reached at last the stall of the Golden Horse. It was the most beautiful horse in the world

and the gleam of its shining flanks was like sunshine in the dark stable.

Janko stroked its golden mane and whispered softly into its ear. The horse responded to his touch and rubbed its muzzle against his shoulder.

Janko reached over to take the hempen bridle and then he paused. "It would be an outrage," he thought to himself, "to put a common rope on this glorious creature!"

Just think of it! For the third time Janko forgot the Little Fox's warning! I have no excuse to make for him. I don't see how he could have forgotten a third time! But he did. He took the golden bridle instead of the hempen one and put it over the head of the Golden Horse. The Horse neighed and instantly all the sleeping guards awoke and came running to the stall. They caught Janko, of course, and when morning broke carried him to their master, the king.

He questioned Janko as the others had done and Janko answered him simply:

"You see I have to have the Golden Horse, O king, to exchange it for the Golden Apple-Tree. And I have to have the Golden Apple-Tree to exchange it for the Magic Grape-Vine that really belongs to my

father. It was stolen from him years ago and ever since then his left eye has wept over the loss of it. Give me the Golden Horse, O king, for if you don't give him to me I shall have to come back and try again to steal him."

"But, Janko," the king said, "I can't give you the Golden Horse for nothing! But I tell you what I'll do: I will give him to you provided you get for me the Golden Maiden who has never seen the sun."

With that Janko was dismissed and led out of the stable.

Janko really was awfully ashamed this time when he had again to confess to the Little Fox that he had forgotten her warning and had touched the golden bridle.

"Janko! Janko!" the Little Fox said. "Where are your wits! Now what shall we do?"

Then Janko told the Little Fox of the king's offer:

"He will give me the Golden Horse provided I get for him the Golden Maiden who has never seen the sun. Dear Little Fox, will you help me this one time more? I know I am very stupid but I promise you faithfully that this time I will not forget."

"Of course, brother," the Little Fox said, "I'll help you again. But this will have to be the last time. If

you forget this time I won't be able to help you any more. Take hold of my tail and away we'll go."

So for the fourth time Janko took hold of the Little Fox's tail and away they went. They went and they went—I can't tell you how far! But they weren't tired when they arrived, they weren't even breathless.

"Now, brother," the Little Fox said, "listen carefully to what I tell you. Here we are in another kingdom close to a great cavern where for sixteen years the Golden Maiden has been kept a prisoner under the enchantment of her wicked mother and never allowed to see the golden light of the sun. There are forty-eight chambers in the cavern and each chamber is guarded by a watch of twelve guards. Steal softly through each chamber when the eyes of all the guards are wide open and staring straight at you. In the last chamber of all you will find the Golden Maiden playing in her Golden Cradle. Over the Cradle stands a fearful ghost who will cry out to you to go away and threaten to kill you. But don't be afraid. It is only an empty ghost which the wicked mother has placed there to frighten men off from rescuing the Golden Maiden. Take the Golden Maiden by the hand, put the Golden Cradle on your shoulder, and hurry back to me. But one thing:

As you leave each chamber be sure to lock the door after you so that the guards when they wake cannot follow you."

Janko crept into the cavern and cautiously made his way from chamber to chamber through the wide-eyed guards. In the forty-eighth chamber he found the Golden Maiden playing in her Golden Cradle. He ran to take her when a horrible creature rose above the Cradle and in hollow tones cried: "Back! Back! Back!" For a moment Janko was frightened, then he remembered that the awful creature was only an empty ghost. So he went boldly up to the Golden Cradle and sure enough the ghost faded away.

"You have come to rescue me, haven't you?" the Golden Maiden cried.

She gave Janko her hand and he helped her to her feet. Then he put the Golden Cradle on his shoulder and together they hurried out from chamber to chamber. And I am happy to tell you that this time Janko remembered the Little Fox's warning and locked the door of every chamber as they left it. So they reached the upper world safely and found the Little Fox waiting for them.

"There's no time to lose," the Little Fox said. "Put the Cradle across my back, Janko, and take hold of my

tail with one hand and give your other hand to the Golden Maiden and away we'll go."

Janko did as the Little Fox said and away they all three went.

When they reached the stable of the Golden Horse, the Little Fox said:

"It doesn't seem right to give the Golden Maiden to the king of the Golden Horse unless she wants us to, does it?"

The Golden Maiden at once begged them to keep her.

"Don't give me to the king of the Golden Horse!" she said. "I want to stay with Janko who has rescued me!"

"But unless I give up the Golden Maiden," Janko asked, "how can I get the Golden Horse?"

"Perhaps I can help you," the Little Fox said. "Perhaps I can enchant myself into looking like the Golden Maiden."

With that the Little Fox leaped up in the air, turned this way and that, and lo! you might have thought her the Golden Maiden except that her eyes were still fox's eyes.

"Now leave the Maiden outside here hidden in her Golden Cradle and take me in to the master of the stable. Exchange me for the Golden Horse and make

off at once. Then pick up the Golden Maiden in her Golden Cradle and ride away and soon I'll join you."

Janko did this very thing. He took in the fox maiden and exchanged her for the Golden Horse and instantly rode off as the Little Fox had told him.

The king of the stable at once called all his courtiers together and showed them the fox maiden.

"See," he said, "this is the Golden Maiden who has never seen the sun! She is the most beautiful maiden in the world and she now belongs to me!"

The courtiers looked at her and admired her, but one of them a little keener than the others said:

"Yes, she's very beautiful and all that but look at her eyes. They don't look like maiden's eyes but like fox's eyes!"

Instantly at the word *fox* the false maiden turned to a fox and went scampering off.

"See what you've done!" cried the king in a fury. "You have changed my Golden Maiden into a fox with your nonsense! You shall pay for this with your life!" And he had him executed at once.

The Little Fox meantime had caught up with Janko and the Golden Maiden and the Golden Horse. As they neared the garden of the king of the Golden Apple-Tree the Fox said:

"It would be a pity to give away the Golden Horse. Rightly it belongs to the Golden Maiden and was taken from her by her wicked mother."

"Don't give my Golden Horse away!" the Golden Maiden begged.

"But how else can I get the Golden Apple-Tree?" Janko asked.

"Perhaps I can help you," the Little Fox said. "Perhaps I can enchant myself into looking like the Golden Horse."

With that the Little Fox leaped up in the air, turned this way and that, and lo! you might have thought her the Golden Horse except that her tail was still a fox's tail.

When they reached the garden of the Golden Apple-Tree, Janko left the Golden Horse and the Golden Maiden outside and took the fox horse in to the king.

The king was delighted and at once had his servants deliver to Janko the Golden Apple-Tree.

When Janko was safely gone, the king called all his courtiers together and showed them the fox horse.

"See my Golden Horse!" he said. "Isn't it the most beautiful horse in the world!"

"It is! It is!" they all told him.

But one courtier, a little keener than the rest, remarked:

“What a curious tail for a horse to have! It looks like a fox’s tail!”

At the word *fox* the false horse changed back into a fox and went scampering off.

“See what you’ve done with your nonsense!” cried the king. “You have lost me my Golden Horse and now you shall lose your own life!” And he ordered the courtier to be executed at once.

The Fox soon caught up with the real Golden Horse and with Janko and the Golden Maiden who were holding in their arms the Golden Cradle and the Golden Apple-Tree.

“It will never do to give up the Golden Apple-Tree,” the Fox said, “for it, too, rightly belongs to the Golden Maiden. I’ll have to see again if I can help you.”

So when they neared the garden of the Magic Grape-Vine, the Little Fox leaped in the air, turned this way and that, and lo! you might have thought her the Golden Apple-Tree except that her fruit instead of being round was long and pointed like a fox’s head.

Janko gave the king the fox tree and received in return the Magic Grape-Vine that really belonged to his



The Golden Maiden, the Farmer and the Empty Ghost

father and not to the king at all. He hurried back to the Golden Maiden who was waiting for him with the Golden Horse and the Golden Apple-Tree and the Golden Cradle and off they all went.

The king was delighted with his fox tree and called his courtiers to come and admire it.

"Beautiful! Beautiful!" they all said, and one of them examining the fruit carefully remarked:

"But see these apples! They are not round like apples but long and pointed like a fox's head!"

He had no sooner said the word *fox* than the tree turned into a fox and went scampering off.

"See what you've done with your nonsense!" cried the king. "You have lost me my Golden Apple-Tree and now I shall lose you your head!" And he ordered the courtier to be executed at once.

When the Fox caught up with the Golden Horse, she said to Janko:

"Now, my brother, it is time for us to part. You have the Magic Grape-Vine and soon your father's left eye will no longer weep. Besides, you are carrying home the Golden Maiden on her own Golden Horse and with her Golden Apple-Tree and her Golden Cradle. God has blessed you in your undertaking and will continue to bless you so long as you are good and

kind. Farewell now and think sometimes of your sister, the Little Lame Fox."

Janko wept at thought of parting with the Little Fox and the Little Fox promised him that she would help him again if ever he needed her. Then she turned and trotted off into the woods and Janko rode homewards without her.

When he reached the crossroads where he had parted from his brothers just one year before he came upon a crowd of angry farmers belaboring two men who had been robbing their barns. Janko found that the two men were his own brothers who since he had seen them had fallen into bad company, lost all their money at cards, and had finally taken to thieving. Janko paid the farmers for the damage his brothers had done them and took his brothers home with him.

You can imagine the old farmer's happiness at seeing all three of his sons after a whole year's absence. It was even greater than his delight at getting back his Magic Grape-Vine. But that doesn't mean that he wasn't delighted to have back the Grape-Vine. At the first cup of wine that the Vine poured him, his left eye ceased weeping and it was never known to weep again.

He was delighted, too, at having the Golden Maiden

in the house and pleased when people came from far and near to see the Maiden's Golden Horse and Golden Apple-Tree and Golden Cradle. He even began to hope that she might marry one of his sons before some prince came along and snatched her away. He thought the Maiden would make a wonderful bride for the oldest. Unfortunately Janko had not told him what reprobates the two older sons were, and the older brothers themselves had given their father to understand that it was really they who had found the Magic Grape-Vine and rescued the Golden Maiden. You see instead of being grateful to Janko for having saved their necks from the angry farmers, they hated him worse than ever.

"That Booby!" the older brother growled. "Just because he took the left-hand road and found the Magic Grape-Vine he thinks himself so much better than us! It was just luck—that's all it was! Any one who took the left-hand road could have found the old Grape-Vine!"

"And do you notice the way the Golden Maiden always smiles on him?" the other said. "The first thing we know she'll be marrying him and giving him the Golden Horse and the Golden Apple-Tree and the Golden Cradle! Then where will we be?"

“Brother,” whispered the first, “let us make away with him!”

So they plotted together and they asked Janko to go hunting with them the next day. Suspecting nothing Janko went. When they came to a deep well in the woods they asked Janko to reach them a cup of water. As he stooped over into the well they pushed him all the way in and drowned him. That’s the kind of brothers they were! Then they went home and pretended to be surprised that Janko hadn’t come home before them.

He didn’t come that night or the next day either, and the Golden Maiden grew sad and quiet, the Magic Grape-Vine no longer poured out its precious wine every hour, the Golden Apple-Tree stopped putting forth its buds and blossoms and golden fruit, and the Golden Horse languished and drooped its lovely head.

“Everything goes wrong when Janko isn’t here!” the farmer said. “Where can he be?”

On the third day the Golden Maiden suddenly began to laugh and sing, the Magic Grape-Vine again poured forth a bucket of precious wine every hour, the Golden Apple-Tree put out buds and blossoms and golden fruit, and the Golden Horse lifted its beautiful head and neighed loud and happily. And do you know why?

Because the Little Lame Fox had just rescued Janko and brought him back to life! She pulled him out of the well, and rolled him about on the ground, and worked over him until all the water was emptied from his lungs and he was able to breathe again.

Then as he opened his eyes the Little Fox said:

“I told you, brother, I’d come again if you needed my help. I was just in time for a little longer and I could never have brought you back to life. And now, brother, the enchantment that held me is broken and I need no longer go about as a Little Lame Fox. My mother was a wicked witch and she enchanted me because she was angry with me for saving a man whom she wanted to kill. So she turned me into a little fox and she said I should have to remain a fox forever unless I succeeded in bringing back to life my benefactor. You are my benefactor, Janko, for you shared your bread and cheese with me the first time we met, and now I have been able to bring you back to life.”

As she spoke she changed into a lovely maiden.

“Good-by, Janko,” she said. “Go home now and tell your father how your evil brothers have treated you. Unless you do this they will plot against the Golden Maiden and you may not be able to protect her.”

So Janko and the maiden kissed each other as a

brother and sister might and the maiden went her way and Janko returned to his father's house.

The Golden Maiden and the old farmer were not in the least surprised to see him for things were so happy again that they just knew it must be because Janko was coming back. But his two brothers when they caught sight of him alive and well were so frightened that they took to their heels and ran off as fast as they could go and what's more they've never shown themselves since. And good riddance, too, I say, for they were wicked evil fellows and would only have injured Janko further if they could.

When Janko told his father all the wicked things they had done, the old farmer could scarcely believe his ears.

"And to think," he said, "I had been hoping the Golden Maiden would marry one of them! Mercy me! Mercy me!"

"But, father," the Golden Maiden said—she called him *father* now and it pleased him mightily; "father, I should rather marry Janko!"

"Marry Janko!" the farmer cried. "Why, my dear, Janko is a stupid lad, not nearly so clever as his two brothers!"

"I don't care if he is stupid. He's got a good heart and that's more than the other two have. And besides

that he's got a brave heart for he rescued me from the dark cavern and he faced the awful ghost that stood over my Golden Cradle. Why, father, I'd rather marry Janko than any prince in the world!"

You can imagine Janko's feelings when he heard this!

"I'd feel like a prince if you did marry me, dear Golden One!" he cried.

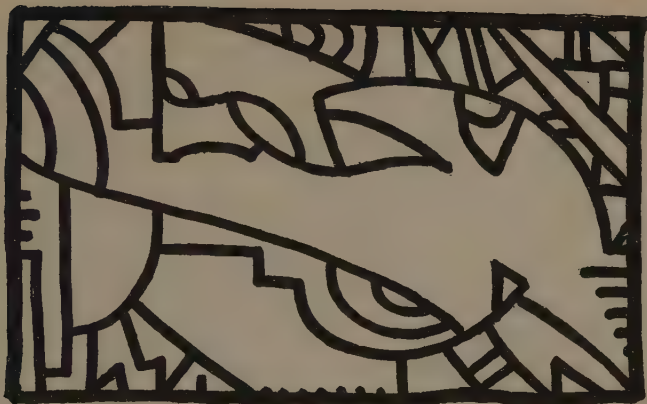
Well, she did marry him, and sure enough he did feel like a prince. What prince, I'd like to know, had a lovelier bride? None! And was there any prince in the world whose bride brought him greater riches than the Golden Apple-Tree, the Golden Horse, and Golden Cradle? No, not one! And furthermore the farmer promised that, when he died, he would leave him the Magic Grape-Vine.

So Janko lived happy and prosperous. And it all came about through his having a good honest heart.



MIRRI, THE CAT





MIRRI, THE CAT



One day while the Fox was out walking in the forest he met a stranger.

“Good day,” he said. “Who are you?”

“I am Mirri,” the stranger said, “a poor unfortunate Cat out of employment. I had service in a decent family but I’ve had to leave them.”

“Did they treat you badly?” the Fox asked.

“No, it wasn’t that. They were considerate enough but they kept getting poorer and poorer until finally

they hadn't food enough to feed us animals. Then I overheard the master say that soon they'd be forced to eat us and that they'd begin with me. At that I decided it was time for me to run away and here I am."

"My poor Cat," Mikko said, "you've had a cruel experience! Why don't you take service with me?"

"Will I be safe with you?" the Cat asked. "Will you protect me?"

"Will I?" the Fox repeated boastfully. "My dear Mirri, once it becomes known that you are Mikko's servant all the animals will show you a wholesome respect."

"Well then, I'll enter your service," the Cat said.

So the bargain was struck and the Fox at once began to train his new servant.

"Now, Mirri, tell me: what would you do if you suddenly met a Bear?"

"There's just one thing I could do, master: I'd run up a tree."

The Fox laughed.

"You must have more ways than one to meet such a situation! Take me now: there are any of a hundred things that I could do if I met a Bear!"

Just then Osmo, the Bear, ambled softly up behind the Fox. The Cat saw him and instantly flew up a



*He jerked quickly away and
fled and the Bear was left
standing with his mouth wide open*



tree. Before the Fox could move Osmo clutched him firmly on the shoulder with his teeth.

"Oh, master, master!" the Cat called down from the tree. "What's this? I with my one way have escaped and you with your hundred are caught!"

But the Fox paid no heed to the Cat. He twisted his head around and looked reproachfully at the Bear.

"Why, Osmo, my dear old friend!" he said, "what in the world do you mean taking hold of me so roughly! Ouch! You're nipping my shoulder, really you are! I don't understand why you're acting this way! Here I've always been such a good friend to you, so faithful, so true, so—"

"What!" rumbled the Bear. "Faithful! True! Oh, you—"

Osmo's feelings overcame him to such an extent that he opened his jaws to roar out freely his denial of the Fox's hypocrisy.

That gave the Fox just the chance he wanted. He jerked quickly away and fled and the Bear was left standing with his mouth wide open.

Later when the Bear had ambled off the Fox returned and called the Cat down from the tree.

"You see, Mirri," he remarked casually, "it wasn't anything at all for me to get the best of the Bear!"

He could see that he had vastly impressed the Cat, so he let the subject drop.

"Come along, Mirri," he said, "it's time for us to go home."



THE DRAGON'S STRENGTH



The Story of the Youngest Prince Who Killed the Sparrow

THE DRAGON'S STRENGTH

THERE was once a King who had three sons. One day the oldest son went hunting and when night fell his huntsmen came riding home without him.

"Where is the prince?" the King asked.

"Isn't he here?" the huntsmen said. "He left us in midafternoon chasing a hare near the Old Mill up the river. We haven't seen him since and we supposed he must have come home alone."

When he hadn't returned the following day his brother, the second prince, went out to search for him.

"I'll go to the Old Mill," he said to the King, "and see what's become of him."

So he mounted his horse and rode up the river. As he neared the Old Mill a hare crossed his path and the second prince being a hunter like his brother at once gave chase. His attendant waited for his return but waited in vain. Night fell and still there was no sign of the second prince.

The attendant returned to the palace and told the King what had happened. The King was surprised but not unduly alarmed and the following day when the

Youngest Prince asked to go hunting alone the King suggested that he go in the direction of the Old Mill to find out if he could what was keeping his brothers.

The Youngest Prince who had listened carefully to what his brothers' attendants had reported decided to act cautiously. So when a hare crossed his path as he approached the Old Mill, instead of giving it chase, he rode off as though he were hunting other game. Later he returned to the Old Mill from another direction.

He found an old woman sitting in front of it.

"Good evening, granny," he said in a friendly tone, pulling up his horse for a moment's chat. "Do you live here? You know I thought the Old Mill was deserted."

The old woman looked at him and shook her head gloomily.

"Deserted indeed! My boy, take an old woman's advice and don't have anything to do with this old mill! It's an evil place!"

"Why, granny," the Prince said, "what's the matter with it?"

The old woman peered cautiously around and when she saw they were alone she beckoned the Prince to come near. Then she whispered:

"A dragon lives here! A horrible monster! He

takes the form of a hare and lures people into the mill. Then he captures them. Some of them he kills and eats and others he holds as prisoners in an underground dungeon. I'm one of his prisoners and he keeps me here to work for him."

"Granny," the Youngest Prince said, "would you like me to rescue you?"

"My boy, you couldn't do it! You have no idea what a strong evil monster the dragon is."

"If you found out something for me, granny, I think I might be able to overcome the dragon and rescue you."

The old woman was doubtful but she promised to do anything the Youngest Prince asked.

"Well then, granny, find out from the dragon where his strength is, whether in his own body or somewhere else. Find out to-night and I'll come back to-morrow at this same hour to see you."

So that night when the dragon came home, after he had supped and when she was scratching his head to make him drowsy for bed, the old woman said to him:

"Master, I think you're the strongest dragon in the world! Tell me now, where does your strength lie—in your own beautiful body or somewhere else?"

"You're right, old woman," the dragon grunted: "I

am pretty strong as dragons go. But I don't keep my strength in my own body. No, indeed! That would be too dangerous. I keep it in the hearth yonder."

At that the old woman ran over to the hearth and, stooping down, she kissed it and caressed it.

"O beautiful hearth!" she said, "where my master's strength is hidden! How happy are the ashes that cover your stones!"

The dragon laughed with amusement.

"That's the time I fooled you, old woman! My strength isn't in the hearth at all! It's in the tree in front of the mill."

The old woman at once ran out of the mill and threw her arms about the tree.

"O tree!" she cried, "most beautiful tree in the world, guard carefully our master's strength and let no harm come to it!"

Again the dragon laughed.

"I've fooled you another time, old woman! Come here and scratch my head some more and this time I'll tell you the truth for I see you really love your master."

So the old woman went back and scratched the dragon's head and the dragon told her the truth about his strength.

“ I keep it far away,” he said. “ In the third kingdom from here near the Tsar’s own city there is a deep lake. A dragon lives at the bottom of the lake. In the dragon there is a wild boar; in the boar a hare; in the hare a pigeon; in the pigeon a sparrow. My strength is in the sparrow. Let any one kill the sparrow and I should die that instant. But I am safe. No one but shepherds ever come to the lake and even they don’t come any more for the dragon has eaten up so many of them that the lake has got a bad name. Indeed, nowadays even the Tsar himself is hard put to it to find a shepherd. Oh, I tell you, old woman, your master is a clever one!”

So now the old woman had the dragon’s secret and the next day she told it to the Youngest Prince. He at once devised a plan whereby he hoped to overcome the dragon. He dressed himself as a shepherd and with crook in hand started off on foot for the third kingdom. He traveled through villages and towns, across rivers and over mountains, and reached at last the third kingdom and the Tsar’s own city. He presented himself at the palace and asked employment as a shepherd.

The guards looked at him in surprise and said:

“ A shepherd! Are you sure you want to be a shepherd?”

Then they called to their companions: "Here's a youth who wants to be a shepherd!" And the word went through the palace and even the Tsar heard it.

"Send the youth to me," he ordered.

"Do you really want to be my shepherd?" he asked the Youngest Prince.

The Youngest Prince said yes, he did.

"If I put you in charge of the sheep, where would you pasture them?"

"Isn't there a lake beyond the city," the Prince asked, "where the grazing is good?"

"H'm!" said the Tsar. "So you know about that lake, too! What else do you know?"

"I've heard the shepherds disappear."

"And still you want to try your luck?" the Tsar exclaimed.

Just then the Tsar's only daughter, a lovely Princess, who had been looking at the young stranger, slipped over to her father and whispered:

"But, father, you can't let such a handsome young man as that go off with the sheep! It would be dreadful if he never returned!"

The Tsar whispered back:

"Hush, child! Your concern for the young man's safety does credit to your noble feelings. But this is

not the time or the place for sentiment. We must consider first the welfare of the royal sheep."

He turned to the Youngest Prince:

"Very well, young man, you may consider yourself engaged as shepherd. Provide yourself with whatever you need and assume your duties at once."

"There is one thing," the Youngest Prince said; "when I start out to-morrow morning with the sheep I should like to take with me two strong boarhounds, a falcon, and a set of bagpipes."

"You shall have them all," the Tsar promised.

Early the next morning when the Princess peeped out of her bedroom window she saw the new shepherd driving the royal flocks to pasture. A falcon was perched on his shoulder; he had a set of bagpipes under his arm; and he was leading two powerful boarhounds on a leash.

"It's a shame!" the Princess said to herself. "He'll probably never return and he's such a handsome young man, too!" And she was so unhappy at thought of never again seeing the new shepherd that she couldn't go back to sleep.

Well, the Youngest Prince reached the lake and turned out his sheep to graze. He perched the falcon on a log, tied the dogs beside it, and laid his bagpipes

on the ground. Then he took off his smock, rolled up his hose, and wading boldly into the lake called out in a loud voice:

“Ho, dragon, come out and we’ll try a wrestling match! That is, if you’re not afraid!”

“Afraid?” bellowed an awful voice. “Who’s afraid?”

The water of the lake churned this way and that and a horrible scaly monster came to the surface. He crawled out on shore and clutched the Prince around the waist. And the Prince clutched him in a grip just as strong and there they swayed back and forth, and rolled over, and wrestled together on the shore of the lake without either getting the better of the other. By midafternoon when the sun was hot, the dragon grew faint and cried out:

“Oh, if I could but dip my burning head in the cool water, then I could toss you as high as the sky!”

“Don’t talk nonsense!” the Prince said. “If the Tsar’s daughter would kiss my forehead, then I could toss you twice as high!”

After that the dragon slipped out of the Prince’s grasp, plunged into the water, and disappeared. The Prince waited for him but he didn’t show his scaly head again that day.

When evening came, the Prince washed off the grime of the fight, dressed himself carefully, and then looking as fresh and handsome as ever drove home his sheep. With the falcon on his shoulder and the two hounds at his heels he came playing a merry tune on his bagpipes.

The townspeople hearing the bagpipes ran out of their houses and cried to each other:

“The shepherd’s come back!”

The Princess ran to her window and, when she saw the shepherd alive and well, she put her hand to her heart and said:

“Oh!”

Even the Tsar was pleased.

“I’m not a bit surprised that he’s back!” he said. “There’s something about this youth that I like!”

The next day the Tsar sent two of his trusted servants to the lake to see what was happening there. They hid themselves behind some bushes on a little hill that commanded the lake. They were there when the shepherd arrived and they watched him as he waded out into the water and challenged the dragon as on the day before.

They heard the shepherd call out in a loud voice:

“Ho, dragon, come out and we’ll try a wrestling match! That is, if you’re not afraid!”

And from the water they heard an awful voice bellow back:

“Afraid? Who’s afraid?”

Then they saw the water of the lake churn this way and that and a horrible scaly monster come to the surface. They saw him crawl out on shore and clutch the shepherd around the waist. And they saw the shepherd clutch him in a grip just as strong. And they watched the two as they swayed back and forth and rolled over and wrestled together without either getting the better of the other. By midafternoon when the sun grew hot they saw the dragon grow faint and they heard him cry out:

“Oh, if I could only dip my burning head in the cool water, then I could toss you as high as the sky!”

And they heard the shepherd reply:

“Don’t talk nonsense! If the Tsar’s daughter would kiss my forehead, then I could toss you twice as high!”

Then they saw the dragon slip out of the shepherd’s grasp, plunge into the water, and disappear. They waited but he didn’t show his scaly head again that day.

So the Tsar’s servants hurried home before the shepherd and told the Tsar all they had seen and heard. The Tsar was mightily impressed with the bravery of

the shepherd and he declared that if he killed that horrid dragon he should have the Princess herself for wife!

He sent for his daughter and told her all that his servants had reported and he said to her:

“My daughter, you, too, can help rid your country of this monster if you go out with the shepherd tomorrow and when the time comes kiss him on the forehead. You will do this, will you not, for your country's sake?”

The Princess blushed and trembled and the Tsar, looking at her in surprise, said:

“What! Shall a humble shepherd face a dragon unafraid and the daughter of the Tsar tremble!”

“Father,” the Princess cried, “it isn't the dragon that I'm afraid of!”

“What then?” the Tsar asked.

But what it was she was afraid of the Princess would not confess. Instead she said:

“If the welfare of my country require that I kiss the shepherd on the forehead, I shall do so.”

So the next morning when the shepherd started out with his sheep, the falcon on his shoulder, the dogs at his heels, the bagpipes under his arm, the Princess walked beside him.

Her eyes were downcast and he saw that she was trembling.

"Do not be afraid, dear Princess," he said to her. "Nothing shall harm you—I promise that!"

"I'm not afraid," the Princess murmured. But she continued to blush and tremble and, although the shepherd tried to look into her eyes to reassure her, she kept her head averted.

This time the Tsar himself and many of his courtiers had gone on before and taken their stand on the hill that overlooked the lake to see the final combat of the shepherd and the dragon.

When the shepherd and the Princess reached the lake, the shepherd put his falcon on the log as before and tied the dogs beside it and laid his bagpipes on the ground. Then he threw off his smock, rolled up his hose, and wading boldly into the lake called out in a loud voice:

"Ho, dragon, come out and we'll try a wrestling match! That is, if you're not afraid!"

"Afraid?" bellowed an awful voice. "Who's afraid?"

The water of the lake churned this way and that and the horrible scaly monster came to the surface. He crawled to shore and clutched the shepherd around the



Next Morning the Princess Peeped Out and Saw the Shepherd

waist. The shepherd clutched him in a grip just as strong and there they swayed back and forth and rolled over and wrestled together on the shore of the lake without either getting the better of the other. The Princess without the least show of fear stood nearby calling out encouragement to the shepherd and waiting for the moment when the shepherd should need her help.

By midafternoon when the sun was hot, the dragon grew faint and cried out:

“ Oh, if I could but dip my burning head in the cool water, then I could toss you as high as the sky! ”

“ Don't talk nonsense! ” the shepherd said. “ If the Tsar's daughter would kiss my forehead then I could toss you twice as high! ”

Instantly the Princess ran forward and kissed the shepherd three times. The first kiss fell on his forehead, the second on his nose, the third on his mouth. With each kiss his strength increased an hundredfold and taking the dragon in a mighty grip he tossed him up so high that for a moment the Tsar and all the courtiers lost sight of him in the sky. Then he fell to earth with such a thud that he burst.

Out of his body sprang a wild boar. The shepherd was ready for this and on the moment he unleashed

the two hounds and they fell on the boar and tore him to pieces.

Out of the boar jumped a rabbit. It went leaping across the meadow but the dogs caught it and killed it.

Out of the rabbit flew a pigeon. Instantly the shepherd unloosed the falcon. It rose high in the air, then swooped down upon the pigeon, clutched it in its talons, and delivered it into the shepherd's hands.

He cut open the pigeon and found the sparrow.

"Spare me! Spare me!" squawked the sparrow.

"Tell me where my brothers are," the shepherd demanded with his fingers about the sparrow's throat.

"Your brothers? They are alive and in the deep dungeon that lies below the Old Mill. Behind the mill there are three willow saplings growing from one old root. Cut the saplings and strike the root. A heavy iron door leading down into the dungeon will open. In the dungeon you will find many captives old and young, your brothers among them. Now that I have told you this are you going to spare my life?"

But the shepherd wrung the sparrow's neck for he knew that only in that way could the monster who had captured his brothers be killed.

Well, now that the dragon was dead the Tsar and all his courtiers came down from the hill and embraced

the shepherd and told him what a brave youth he was.

"You have delivered us all from a horrid monster," the Tsar said, "and to show you my gratitude and the country's gratitude I offer you my daughter for wife."

"Thank you," said the shepherd, "but I couldn't think of marrying the Princess unless she is willing to marry me."

The Princess blushed and trembled just as she had blushed and trembled the night before and that morning, too, on the way to the lake. She tried to speak but could not at first. Then in a very little voice she said:

"As a Princess I think it is my duty to marry this brave shepherd who has delivered my country from this terrible dragon, and—and I think I should want to marry him anyway."

She said the last part of her speech in such a very low voice that only the shepherd himself heard it. But that was right enough because after all it was intended only for him.

So then and there beside the lake before even the shepherd had time to wash his face and hands and put on his smock the Tsar put the Princess's hand in his hand and pronounced them betrothed.

After that the shepherd bathed in the lake and then refreshed and clean he sounded his bagpipes and he and the Princess and the Tsar and all the courtiers returned to the city driving the sheep before them.

All the townspeople came out to meet them and they danced to the music of the bagpipes and there was great rejoicing both over the death of the dragon and over the betrothal of the Princess and the brave shepherd.

The wedding took place at once and the wedding festivities lasted a week. Such feasting as the townspeople had! Such music and dancing!

When the wedding festivities were ended, the shepherd told the Tsar who he really was.

"You say you're a Prince!" the Tsar cried, perfectly delighted at this news. Then he declared he wasn't in the least surprised. In fact, he said, he had suspected as much from the first!

"Do you think it likely," he asked somewhat pompously, "that any daughter of mine would fall in love with a man who wasn't a prince?"

"I think I'd have fallen in love with you whatever you were!" whispered the Princess to her young husband. But she didn't let her father hear her!

The Prince told the Tsar about his brothers' captivity and how he must go home to release them, and the

Tsar at once said that he and his bride might go provided they returned as soon as possible.

They agreed to this and the Tsar fitted out a splendid escort for them and sent them away with his blessing.

So the Prince now traveled back through the towns and villages of three kingdoms, across rivers and over mountains, no longer a humble shepherd on foot, but a rich and mighty personage riding in a manner that befitted his rank.

When he reached the deserted mill, his friend the old woman was waiting for him.

"I know, my Prince, you have succeeded for the monster has disappeared."

"Yes, granny, you are right: I have succeeded. I found the dragon in the lake, and the boar in the dragon, and the rabbit in the boar, and the pigeon in the rabbit, and the sparrow in the pigeon. I took the sparrow and killed it. So you are free now, granny, to return to your home. And soon all those other poor captives will be free."

He went behind the mill and found the three willow saplings. He cut them off and struck the old root. Sure enough a heavy iron door opened. This led down into a deep dungeon which was crowded with unfortu-

nate prisoners. The Prince led them all out and sent them their various ways. He found his own two brothers among them and led them home to his father.

There was great rejoicing in the King's house, and in the King's heart, too, for he had given up hope of ever seeing any of his sons again.

The King was so charmed with the Princess that he said it was a pity that she couldn't marry his oldest son so that she might one day be Queen.

"The Youngest Prince is a capable young man," the King said, "and there's no denying that he managed this business of killing the dragon very neatly. But he is after all only the Youngest Prince with very little hope of succeeding to the kingdom. If you hadn't married him in such haste one of his older brothers might easily have fallen in love with you."

"I don't regret my haste," the Princess said. "Besides he is now my father's heir. But that doesn't matter for I should be happy with the Youngest Prince if he were only a shepherd."

JANE, JANE, DON'T COMPLAIN!



JANE, JANE, DON'T COMPLAIN!



There was once a man who was poor and lazy and he had a wife who was even worse. Her name was Jenny. Jenny was so lazy that it was an effort for her to lift one foot after the other.

And in addition to her laziness she was an everlasting complainer. "Oh!" she used to grunt in the morning, "I wish we didn't have to get up!" and "Oh!" she used to groan at night, "I wish we didn't have to take our shoes off before going to bed!"

One day when they were both out in the forest collecting faggots, Jenny said:

"I don't see why we're not rich! I don't see why the King should live at his ease while we have to grub for everything we get! I just hate work!"

Of course the trouble both with Jenny and her husband was not that they worked but that they didn't work. It was because they didn't that they had so much time to think about it.

"Drat it all!" Jenny went on, whining, "Adam and Eve are to blame for all our misfortunes! If they hadn't disobeyed God's commandment and eaten that apple, we'd all be living in the Garden of Eden to this day! It's all their fault that we have to moil and toil and hurry and scurry!"

"Yes," the man agreed, "it is, especially Eve's. Of course Adam was to blame, too, for he should have controlled his wife better. But Eve was the more to blame. If I had been Adam I shouldn't have allowed her to touch the apple in the first place."

Now it happened that the King who was out hunting that day overheard this conversation.

"Ha!" he thought to himself, "I've a great mind to teach these two people a lesson!"

He pushed aside the bushes that had hidden him from them and said:

"Good day to you both! I have just heard your complaints and I, too, think it very hard that you should be poor while others are rich. I tell you what I'll do: I'll take you both home with me to the castle and maintain you in ease and luxury provided you obey me in just one thing."

Jenny and her husband agreed to this eagerly and just as they were the King took them home with him to

the castle. He lodged them in a room with golden furniture, he gave them fine clothes to wear, and for food he had them served the choicest delicacies in the world.

As they sat eating their first royal meal, he came in to them carrying in his hands a covered dish of silver. He put the dish down in the center of the table.

"Now, my friends," he said, "I promised to maintain you in this ease and luxury provided you obeyed me in one thing. You see this silver dish. I forbid you ever to lift the cover. If you disobey me, that moment I shall take from you your fine clothes and send you back to your poverty and misery."

With that the King left them and they stuffed themselves to their hearts' content with the delicate foods set before them.

They were so busy, eating and drinking and admiring themselves in their fine clothes, that for the first day they didn't give the covered dish a thought. The second day the wife noticed it and said:

"That's the thing we're not to touch. Well, for my part I don't want to touch it. I don't want to do anything but eat and sleep and try on my pretty new clothes."

By the third day they had eaten so much and so

steadily that they were no longer hungry and when they lay down on the big soft bed they no longer fell instantly asleep.

"Dear me," Jenny began whining, "I don't know what's the matter with this food! It doesn't taste as good as it used to! Maybe the cook has grown careless! I think we ought to complain to the King. I'm beginning to feel very uncomfortable and I haven't any appetite at all! I wonder what's in that covered dish. Perhaps it's something to eat, something perfectly delicious! I've half a mind to lift the cover and see."

"Now just you leave that silver dish alone!" the man growled. He, too, had been eating too much and was feeling peevish. "Don't you remember what the King said?"

"Pooh!" cried Jenny. "What do I care what the King said! I think he was just poking fun at us telling us we mustn't lift the cover of that silver dish. After all a dish is a dish and it's no crime to lift a cover even if it is made of silver!"

With that Jenny jumped up and before her husband could stop her she lifted the forbidden cover. Instantly a little white mouse hopped out of the silver dish and scurried away.

"Oh!" Jenny screamed, dropping the cover with a great clatter.

The King who was in an adjoining chamber heard the noise and came in.

"So!" he said, "you have done the one thing that I told you not to do! You haven't been here three days and although you've had everything that heart could wish for yet you couldn't obey me in this one little matter!"

"Your Majesty," the man said, "it was my wife who did it, not I."

"No matter," the King said, "you, too, are to blame. If you had restrained her it wouldn't have happened."

Then he called his servants and had them strip off the fine clothes and dress the couple again in their old rags.

"Now," he said as he drove them from the castle gates, "never again blame Adam and Eve for the misfortunes which you bring upon yourselves!"

MIGHTY MIKKO



The Story of a Poor Woodsman and a Grateful Fox

MIGHTY MIKKO



There was once an old woodsman and his wife who had an only son named Mikko. As the mother lay dying the young man wept bitterly.

“When you are gone, my dear mother,” he said, “there will be no one left to think of me.”

The poor woman comforted him as best she could and said to him:

“You will still have your father.”

Shortly after the woman’s death, the old man, too, was taken ill.

“Now, indeed, I shall be left desolate and alone,” Mikko thought, as he sat beside his father’s bedside and saw him grow weaker and weaker.

“My boy,” the old man said just before he died, “I have nothing to leave you but the three snares with which these many years I have caught wild animals. Those snares now belong to you. When I am dead,

go into the woods and if you find a wild creature caught in any of them, free it gently and bring it home alive."

After his father's death, Mikko remembered the snares and went out to the woods to see them. The first was empty and also the second, but in the third he found a little red Fox. He carefully lifted the spring that had shut down on one of the Fox's feet and then carried the little creature home in his arms. He shared his supper with it and when he lay down to sleep the Fox curled up at his feet. They lived together some time until they became close friends.

"Mikko," said the Fox one day, "why are you so sad?"

"Because I'm lonely."

"Pooh!" said the Fox. "That's no way for a young man to talk! You ought to get married! Then you wouldn't feel lonely!"

"Married!" Mikko repeated. "How can I get married? I can't marry a poor girl because I'm too poor myself and a rich girl wouldn't marry me."

"Nonsense!" said the Fox. "You're a fine well set up young man and you're kind and gentle. What more could a princess ask?"

Mikko laughed to think of a princess wanting him for a husband.

"I mean what I say!" the Fox insisted. "Take our own Princess now. What would you think of marrying her?"

Mikko laughed louder than before.

"I have heard," he said, "that she is the most beautiful princess in the world! Any man would be happy to marry her!"

"Very well," the Fox said, "if you feel that way about her then I'll arrange the wedding for you."

With that the little Fox actually did trot off to the royal castle and gain audience with the King.

"My master sends you greetings," the Fox said, "and he begs you to loan him your bushel measure."

"My bushel measure!" the King repeated in surprise. "Who is your master and why does he want my bushel measure?"

"Ssh!" the Fox whispered as though he didn't want the courtiers to hear what he was saying. Then slipping up quite close to the King he murmured in his ear:

"Surely you have heard of Mikko, haven't you?—Mighty Mikko as he's called."

The King had never heard of any Mikko who was known as Mighty Mikko but, thinking that perhaps he should have heard of him, he shook his head and murmured:

“H’m! Mikko! Mighty Mikko! Oh, to be sure! Yes, yes, of course!”

“My master is about to start off on a journey and he needs a bushel measure for a very particular reason.”

“I understand! I understand!” the King said, although he didn’t understand at all, and he gave orders that the bushel measure which they used in the store-room of the castle be brought in and given to the Fox.

The Fox carried off the measure and hid it in the woods. Then he scurried about to all sorts of little out of the way nooks and crannies where people had hidden their savings and he dug up a gold piece here and a silver piece there until he had a handful. Then he went back to the woods and stuck the various coins in the cracks of the measure. The next day he returned to the King.

“My master, Mighty Mikko,” he said, “sends you thanks, O King, for the use of your bushel measure.”

The King held out his hand and when the Fox gave him the measure he peeped inside to see if by chance it contained any trace of what had recently been measured. His eye of course at once caught the glint of the gold and silver coins lodged in the cracks.

“Ah!” he said, thinking Mikko must be a very mighty lord indeed to be so careless of his wealth; “I

should like to meet your master. Won't you and he come and visit me?"

This was what the Fox wanted the King to say but he pretended to hesitate.

"I thank your Majesty for the kind invitation," he said, "but I fear my master can't accept it just now. He wants to get married soon and we are about to start off on a long journey to inspect a number of foreign princesses."

This made the King all the more anxious to have Mikko visit him at once for he thought that if Mikko should see his daughter before he saw those foreign princesses he might fall in love with her and marry her. So he said to the Fox:

"My dear fellow, you must prevail on your master to make me a visit before he starts out on his travels! You will, won't you?"

The Fox looked this way and that as if he were too embarrassed to speak.

"Your Majesty," he said at last, "I pray you pardon my frankness. The truth is you are not rich enough to entertain my master and your castle isn't big enough to house the immense retinue that always attends him."

The King, who by this time was frantic to see Mikko, lost his head completely.

"My dear Fox," he said, "I'll give you anything in the world if you prevail upon your master to visit me at once! Couldn't you suggest to him to travel with a modest retinue this time?"

The Fox shook his head.

"No. His rule is either to travel with a great retinue or to go on foot disguised as a poor woodsman attended only by me."

"Couldn't you prevail on him to come to me disguised as a poor woodsman?" the King begged. "Once he was here, I could place gorgeous clothes at his disposal."

But still the Fox shook his head.

"I fear Your Majesty's wardrobe doesn't contain the kind of clothes my master is accustomed to."

"I assure you I've got some very good clothes," the King said. "Come along this minute and we'll go through them and I'm sure you'll find some that your master would wear."

So they went to a room which was like a big wardrobe with hundreds and hundreds of hooks upon which were hung hundreds of coats and breeches and embroidered shirts. The King ordered his attendants to bring the costumes down one by one and place them before the Fox.



The King thought that if Mikko should see his daughter

They began with the plainer clothes.

"Good enough for most people," the Fox said, "but not for my master."

Then they took down garments of a finer grade.

"I'm afraid you're going to all this trouble for nothing," the Fox said. "Frankly now, don't you realize that my master couldn't possibly put on any of these things!"

The King, who had hoped to keep for his own use his most gorgeous clothes of all, now ordered these to be shown.

The Fox looked at them sideways, sniffed them critically, and at last said:

"Well, perhaps my master would consent to wear these for a few days. They are not what he is accustomed to wear but I will say this for him: he is not proud."

The King was overjoyed.

"Very well, my dear Fox, I'll have the guest chambers put in readiness for your master's visit and I'll have all these, my finest clothes, laid out for him. You won't disappoint me, will you?"

"I'll do my best," the Fox promised.

With that he bade the King a civil good day and ran home to Mikko.

The next day as the Princess was peeping out of an upper window of the castle, she saw a young woodsman approaching accompanied by a Fox. He was a fine stalwart youth and the Princess, who knew from the presence of the Fox that he must be Mikko, gave a long sigh and confided to her serving maid:

“I think I could fall in love with that young man if he really were only a woodsman!”

Later when she saw him arrayed in her father’s finest clothes—which looked so well on Mikko that no one even recognized them as the King’s—she lost her heart completely and when Mikko was presented to her she blushed and trembled just as any ordinary girl might before a handsome young man.

All the Court was equally delighted with Mikko. The ladies went into ecstasies over his modest manners, his fine figure, and the gorgeousness of his clothes, and the old graybeard Councilors, nodding their heads in approval, said to each other:

“Nothing of the coxcomb about this young fellow! In spite of his great wealth see how politely he listens to us when we talk!”

The next day the Fox went privately to the King, and said:

“My master is a man of few words and quick judg-

ment. He bids me tell you that your daughter, the Princess, pleases him mightily and that, with your approval, he will make his addresses to her at once."

The King was greatly agitated and began:

"My dear Fox—"

But the Fox interrupted him to say:

"Think the matter over carefully and give me your decision to-morrow."

So the King consulted with the Princess and with his Councilors and in a short time the marriage was arranged and the wedding ceremony actually performed!

"Didn't I tell you?" the Fox said, when he and Mikko were alone after the wedding.

"Yes," Mikko acknowledged, "you did promise that I should marry the Princess. But, tell me, now that I am married what am I to do? I can't live on here forever with my wife."

"Put your mind at rest," the Fox said. "I've thought of everything. Just do as I tell you and you'll have nothing to regret. To-night say to the King: 'It is now only fitting that you should visit me and see for yourself the sort of castle over which your daughter is hereafter to be mistress!'"

When Mikko said this to the King, the King was

overjoyed for now that the marriage had actually taken place he was wondering whether he hadn't perhaps been a little hasty. Mikko's words reassured him and he eagerly accepted the invitation.

On the morrow the Fox said to Mikko:

"Now I'll run on ahead and get things ready for you."

"But where are you going?" Mikko said, frightened at the thought of being deserted by his little friend.

The Fox drew Mikko aside and whispered softly:

"A few days' march from here there is a very gorgeous castle belonging to a wicked old dragon who is known as the Worm. I think the Worm's castle would just about suit you."

"I'm sure it would," Mikko agreed. "But how are we to get it away from the Worm?"

"Trust me," the Fox said. "All you need do is this: lead the King and his courtiers along the main highway until by noon to-morrow you reach a crossroads. Turn there to the left and go straight on until you see the tower of the Worm's castle. If you meet any men by the wayside, shepherds or the like, ask them whose men they are and show no surprise at their answer. So now, dear master, farewell until we meet again at your beautiful castle."

The little Fox trotted off at a smart pace and Mikko and the Princess and the King attended by the whole Court followed in more leisurely fashion.

The little Fox, when he had left the main highway at the crossroads, soon met ten woodsmen with axes over their shoulders. They were all dressed in blue smocks of the same cut.

"Good day," the Fox said politely. "Whose men are you?"

"Our master is known as the Worm," the woodsmen told him.

"My poor, poor lads!" the Fox said, shaking his head sadly.

"What's the matter?" the woodsmen asked.

For a few moments the Fox pretended to be too overcome with emotion to speak. Then he said:

"My poor lads, don't you know that the King is coming with a great force to destroy the Worm and all his people?"

The woodsmen were simple fellows and this news threw them into great consternation.

"Is there no way for us to escape?" they asked.

The Fox put his paw to his head and thought.

"Well," he said at last, "there is one way you might escape and that is by telling every one who asks you

that you are the Mighty Mikko's men. But if you value your lives never again say that your master is the Worm."

"We are Mighty Mikko's men!" the woodsmen at once began repeating over and over. "We are Mighty Mikko's men!"

A little farther on the road the Fox met twenty grooms, dressed in the same blue smocks, who were tending a hundred beautiful horses. The Fox talked to the twenty grooms as he had talked to the woodsmen and before he left them they, too, were shouting:

"We are Mighty Mikko's men!"

Next the Fox came to a huge flock of a thousand sheep tended by thirty shepherds all dressed in the Worm's blue smocks. He stopped and talked to them until he had them roaring out:

"We are Mighty Mikko's men!"

Then the Fox trotted on until he reached the castle of the Worm. He found the Worm himself inside lolling lazily about. He was a huge dragon and had been a great warrior in his day. In fact his castle and his lands and his servants and his possessions had all been won in battle. But now for many years no one had cared to fight him and he had grown fat and lazy.

"Good day," the Fox said, pretending to be very

breathless and frightened. "You're the Worm, aren't you?"

"Yes," the dragon said, boastfully, "I am the great Worm!"

The Fox pretended to grow more agitated.

"My poor fellow, I am sorry for you! But of course none of us can expect to live forever. Well, I must hurry along. I thought I would just stop and say good-by."

Made uneasy by the Fox's words, the Worm cried out:

"Wait just a minute! What's the matter?"

The Fox was already at the door but at the Worm's entreaty he paused and said over his shoulder:

"Why, my poor fellow, you surely know, don't you? that the King with a great force is coming to destroy you and all your people!"

"What!" the Worm gasped, turning a sickly green with fright. He knew he was fat and helpless and could never again fight as in the years gone by.

"Don't go just yet!" he begged the Fox. "When is the King coming?"

"He's on the highway now! That's why I must be going! Good-by!"

"My dear Fox, stay just a moment and I'll reward

you richly! Help me to hide so that the King won't find me! What about the shed where the linen is stored? I could crawl under the linen and then if you locked the door from the outside the King could never find me."

"Very well," the Fox agreed, "but we must hurry!"

So they ran outside to the shed where the linen was kept and the Worm hid himself under the linen. The Fox locked the door, then set fire to the shed, and soon there was nothing left of that wicked old dragon, the Worm, but a handful of ashes.

The Fox now called together the dragon's household and talked them over to Mikko as he had the woodsmen and the grooms and the shepherds.

Meanwhile the King and his party were slowly covering the ground over which the Fox had sped so quickly. When they came to the ten woodsmen in blue smocks, the King said:

"I wonder whose woodsmen those are."

One of his attendants asked the woodsmen and the ten of them shouted out at the top of their voices:

"We are Mighty Mikko's men!"

Mikko said nothing and the King and all the Court were impressed anew with his modesty.

A little farther on they met the twenty grooms with

their hundred prancing horses. When the grooms were questioned, they answered with a shout:

“We are Mighty Mikko’s men!”

“The Fox certainly spoke the truth,” the King thought to himself, “when he told me of Mikko’s riches!”

A little later the thirty shepherds when they were questioned made answer in a chorus that was deafening to hear:

“We are Mighty Mikko’s men!”

The sight of the thousand sheep that belonged to his son-in-law made the King feel poor and humble in comparison and the courtiers whispered among themselves:

“For all his simple manner, Mighty Mikko must be a richer, more powerful lord than the King himself! In fact it is only a very great lord indeed who could be so simple!”

At last they reached the castle which from the blue smocked soldiers that guarded the gateway they knew to be Mikko’s. The Fox came out to welcome the King’s party and behind him in two rows all the household servants. These, at a signal from the Fox, cried out in one voice:

“We are Mighty Mikko’s men!”

Then Mikko in the same simple manner that he would have used in his father’s mean little hut in the

woods bade the King and his followers welcome and they all entered the castle where they found a great feast already prepared and waiting.

The King stayed on for several days and the more he saw of Mikko the better pleased he was that he had him for a son-in-law.

When he was leaving he said to Mikko:

"Your castle is so much grander than mine that I hesitate ever asking you back for a visit."

But Mikko reassured the King by saying earnestly:

"My dear father-in-law, when first I entered your castle I thought it was the most beautiful castle in the world!"

The King was flattered and the courtiers whispered among themselves:

"How affable of him to say that when he knows very well how much grander his own castle is!"

When the King and his followers were safely gone, the little red Fox came to Mikko and said:

"Now, my master, you have no reason to feel sad and lonely. You are lord of the most beautiful castle in the world and you have for wife a sweet and lovely Princess. You have no longer any need of me, so I am going to bid you farewell."

Mikko thanked the little Fox for all he had done and the little Fox trotted off to the woods.

So you see that Mikko's poor old father, although he had no wealth to leave his son, was really the cause of all Mikko's good fortune, for it was he who told Mikko in the first place to carry home alive anything he might find caught in the snares.



THE LITTLE SINGING FROG



The Story of a Girl Whose Parents Were Ashamed of Her

THE LITTLE SINGING FROG

THERE was once a poor laborer and his wife who had no children. Every day the woman would sigh and say:

“If only we had a child!”

Then the man would sigh, too, and say:

“It would be pleasant to have a little daughter, wouldn’t it?”

At last they went on a pilgrimage to a holy shrine and there they prayed God to give them a child.

“Any kind of a child!” the woman prayed. “I’d be thankful for a child of our own even if it were a frog!”

God heard their prayer and sent them a little daughter—not a little girl daughter, however, but a little frog daughter. They loved their little frog child dearly and played with her and laughed and clapped their hands as they watched her hopping about the house. But when the neighbors came in and whispered: “Why, that child of theirs is nothing but a frog!” they were ashamed and they decided that when people were about they had better keep their child hidden in a closet.

So the frog girl grew up without playmates of her own age, seeing only her father and mother. She used to play about her father as he worked. He was a vine-dresser in a big vineyard and of course it was great fun for the little frog girl to hop about among the vines.

Every day at noontime the woman used to come to the vineyard carrying her husband's dinner in a basket. The years went by and she grew old and feeble and the daily trip to the vineyard began to tire her and the basket seemed to her to grow heavier and heavier.

"Let me help you, mother," the frog daughter said. "Let me carry father's dinner to him and you sit home and rest."

So from that time on the frog girl instead of the old woman carried the dinner basket to the vineyard. While the old man ate, the frog girl would hop up into the branches of a tree and sing. She sang very sweetly and her old father, when he petted her, used to call her his Little Singing Frog.

Now one day while she was singing the Tsar's Youngest Son rode by and heard her. He stopped his horse and looked this way and that but for the life of him he couldn't see who it was who was singing so sweetly.

"Who is singing?" he asked the old man.

But the old man who, as I told you before, was

ashamed of his frog daughter before strangers, at first pretended not to hear and then, when the young Prince repeated his question, answered gruffly:

“There’s no one singing!”

But the next day at the same hour when the Prince was again riding by he heard the same sweet voice and he stopped again and listened.

“Surely, old man,” he said, “there is some one singing! It is a lovely girl, I know it is! Why, if I could find her, I’d be willing to marry her at once and take her home to my father, the Tsar!”

“Don’t be rash, young man,” the laborer said.

“I mean what I say!” the Prince declared. “I’d marry her in a minute!”

“Are you sure you would?”

“Yes, I’m sure!”

“Very well, then, we’ll see.”

The old man looked up into the tree and called:

“Come down, Little Singing Frog! A Prince wants to marry you!”

So the little frog girl hopped down from among the branches and stood before the Prince.

“She’s my own daughter,” the laborer said, “even if she does look like a frog.”

“I don’t care what she looks like,” the Prince said.

"I love her singing and I love her. And I mean what I say: I'll marry her if she'll marry me. My father, the Tsar, bids me and my brothers present him our brides to-morrow. He bids all the brides bring him a flower and he says he'll give the kingdom to the prince whose bride brings the loveliest flower. Little Singing Frog, will you be my bride and will you come to Court to-morrow bringing a flower?"

"Yes, my Prince," the frog girl said, "I will. But I must not shame you by hopping to Court in the dust. I must ride. So, will you send me a snow-white cock from your father's barnyard?"

"I will," the Prince promised, and before night the snow-white cock had arrived at the laborer's cottage.

Early the next morning the frog girl prayed to the Sun.

"O golden Sun," she said, "I need your help! Give me some lovely clothes woven of your golden rays for I would not shame my Prince when I go to Court."

The Sun heard her prayer and gave her a gown of cloth of gold.

Instead of a flower she took a spear of wheat in her hand and then when the time came she mounted the white cock and rode to the palace.



This, the Bride of the Youngest Prince, Is My Choice

The guards at the palace gate at first refused to admit her.

"This is no place for frogs!" they said to her. "You're looking for a pond!"

But when she told them she was the Youngest Prince's bride, they were afraid to drive her away. So they let her ride through the gate.

"Strange!" they murmured to one another. "The Youngest Prince's bride! She looks like a frog and that was certainly a cock she was riding, wasn't it?"

They stepped inside the gates to look after her and then they saw an amazing sight. The frog girl, still seated on the white cock, was shaking out the folds of a golden gown. She dropped the gown over her head and instantly there was no frog and no white cock but a lovely maiden mounted on a snow-white horse!

Well, the frog girl entered the palace with two other girls, the promised brides of the older princes. They were just ordinary girls both of them. To see them you wouldn't have paid any attention to them one way or the other. But standing beside the lovely bride of the Youngest Prince they seemed more ordinary than ever.

The first girl had a rose in her hand. The Tsar looked at it and at her, sniffed his nose slightly, and turned his head.

The second girl had a carnation. The Tsar looked at her for a moment and murmured:

“Dear me, this will never do!”

Then he looked at the Youngest Prince’s bride and his eye kindled and he said:

“Ah! This is something like!”

She gave him the spear of wheat and he took it and held it aloft. Then he reached out his other hand to her and had her stand beside him as he said to his sons and all the Court:

“This, the bride of the Youngest Prince, is my choice! See how beautiful she is! And yet she knows the useful as well as the beautiful for she has brought me a spear of wheat! The Youngest Prince shall be the Tsar after me and she shall be Tsarina!”

So the little frog girl of whom her parents were ashamed married the Youngest Prince and when the time came wore a Tsarina’s crown.



THE ENCHANTED PEAFOWL



*The Story of the Golden Apples, the Wicked Dragon,
and the Magic Horse*

THE ENCHANTED PEAFOWL

Have you ever heard the story of the Peafowl who became a Queen and of the Tsar's Youngest Son who married her? Well, here it is:

THERE was once a Tsar who took great delight in his garden. Every morning you could see him bending over his flowers or picking the fruit of his favorite tree. This was an apple-tree that had the magic property of bearing buds, blossoms, and golden fruit every twenty-four hours. It was known as the golden apple-tree. In the morning the first thing when he woke up the Tsar would look out his bedroom window to see that all was well with his beloved tree.

One morning when as usual he looked out he was grieved to see that the tree had been stripped of all the golden fruit which had ripened during the night.

"Who has stolen my golden apples?" he cried.

The palace guards looked everywhere for some trace of the thief but found nothing.

The next morning the same thing had happened and

every morning thereafter when the Tsar looked out of his bedroom window he saw that the tree had again been stripped of its golden fruit.

He called his three sons to him and said:

“Is it seemly that a Tsar who has three able-bodied sons should be robbed night after night of his golden apples? Are you willing that this should happen and you do nothing about it?”

The eldest son who was a braggart said:

“My father, you need say no more. I myself will watch to-night and when the thief appears I will overpower him and bring him to you.”

So the eldest son watched that night, standing on guard under the apple-tree and leaning against its trunk.

As midnight approached his eyes grew heavy and he fell asleep. While he slept the golden apples ripened and were stolen and the next morning, as usual, the branches were bare.

The second son who was a crafty youth laughed at his brother and said:

“To-night I will watch. I will pretend to be asleep and when the thief appears I will jump upon him and overpower him.”

So when night came the second son went on guard

under the tree and in order to deceive the thief he lay down on the ground and closed his eyes. At first he stayed wide awake but as the hours dragged by he grew tired and then, because he was in such a comfortable position, he too fell soundly asleep. Midnight came and the apples ripened but the next morning, when the second prince awoke, the tree had again been stripped of its golden fruit.

The Tsar's Youngest Son now said:

"Father, let me go on guard to-night."

His brothers jeered and the Tsar shook his head.

"Nay, nay, my boy, why should you succeed where your older brothers have failed? It is God's will that my golden apples should be stolen and I must submit."

But the Youngest Son insisted that he, too, be given a chance to capture the thief and at last the Tsar consented.

"I will sleep soundly the first part of the night," the Youngest Prince thought to himself, "and with God's help wake up at midnight."

As soon as it was dark he had his bed carried outdoors and placed under the apple-tree. Then after commending his undertaking to God he lay down and fell soundly to sleep. Just before midnight he awoke.

The apples had ripened and were shining among the leaves like golden lanterns.

On the stroke of midnight there was a whirr of wings and nine beautiful peafowl came flying down from the sky. Eight of them settled on the branches of the apple-tree and began eating the golden fruit. The ninth alighted beside the Young Prince and as she touched the ground changed into a lovely maiden.

She was so beautiful and gentle that the Young Prince fell madly in love with her and at once began wooing her with kisses and caresses. She responded to his love and they spent the night together in great happiness.

At the first streak of dawn she jumped up, saying:

“My dear one, I must leave you now!”

“But you will come again, won’t you?” the Prince asked.

“Yes,” she promised him. “To-night.”

Suddenly the Prince remembered the golden apples. The peafowl in the tree were about to eat the last of them.

“Can’t you make them leave just one apple for my father?” the Prince begged.

The maiden spoke to the birds and they flew down

with two of the golden apples, one for the Tsar and one for the Prince himself.

Then the maiden lifted her arms above her head, changed into a peafowl, and with the other eight flew off into the morning sky.

The Prince carried the two apples to his father and the Tsar was so delighted that he forgot to ask the Prince the particulars of his adventure.

The next night the Prince again slept under the apple-tree and awoke just before midnight to hear the whirr of wings and see the nine peafowl come flying down from the sky. Eight of them settled on the branches of the apple-tree and the ninth, as before, alighted beside him and as she touched the earth changed into the lovely maiden of his heart. Again they passed the night together in great happiness and in the early dawn before she flew away the maiden gave him the last two of the golden apples.

This went on night after night until the Prince's two elder brothers were mad with jealousy and consumed with curiosity to know what happened every night under the apple-tree. At last they went to an evil old woman and bribed her to spy on the Young Prince.

"Find out what happens every night at the apple-tree," they told her, "and we will reward you richly."

So the evil old woman hid herself near the apple-tree and that night when the prince fell asleep she crept under his bed. Midnight came and she heard the whirr of wings and presently she saw the white feet of a lovely maiden touch the ground and she heard the prince say: "My love, is it you?"

Then as the Prince and the maiden began kissing each other and exchanging vows of love very slowly and cautiously she reached up her hand from under the bed and groped around until she felt the maiden's hair. Then with a scissors she snipped off a lock.

"Oh!" the maiden cried in terror. She jumped up, lifted her arms above her head, changed into a peafowl, and without another word flew off with the other eight and vanished in the sky.

In a fury the Prince searched about to see what had frightened his loved one. He found the old woman under the bed and dragging her out by the hair he struck her dead with his sword. And good riddance it was, too, for she was an evil old thing and only caused mischief in the world.

But putting the evil old woman out of the way did not, alas, bring back the lovely maiden. The Prince waited for her the next night and the next and many following nights but she nevermore returned.

The magic apple-tree of course was no longer robbed of its golden fruit, so the Tsar was happy once again and never tired of praising the valor of his youngest son. But as for the prince, in spite of his father's praise he grew sadder and sadder.

Finally he went to the Tsar and said:

"Father, I have lost the maiden whom I love and life without her is not worth the living. Unless I go out in the world and find her I shall die."

The Tsar tried to dissuade him but when he could not he mounted him on a fine horse, gave him a serving man to accompany him, and sent him off with his blessing.

The Prince and his man wandered hither and thither over the world inquiring everywhere for news of nine peafowl one of whom was a lovely maiden. They came at last to a lake on the shore of which lived an ugly old woman with an only daughter.

"Nine peafowl," she repeated, "and one of them a lovely maiden! You must mean the nine sisters, the enchanted princesses, who fly about as peafowl. They come here every morning to bathe in the lake. What can you want with them?"

The Prince told the old woman that one of them

was his love and that unless he married her he would die.

“Die, indeed!” scoffed the old woman. “That’s no way for a handsome young man to talk! I’ll tell you what you ought to do: give up thought of this peafowl princess and marry my daughter. Then I’ll make you heir to all my riches.”

She called out her daughter who was as ugly as herself and cross and ill-natured in the bargain. Just one look at her and the Prince said firmly:

“No! If I can’t marry my own dear love I won’t marry any one!”

“Very well!” said the old woman shortly.

When the Prince’s back was turned she called the serving man aside and whispered:

“Will you do what I tell you if I pay you well?”

The serving man who was a mean greedy fellow nodded his head and the old woman handed him a small bellows.

“Hide this in your shirt,” she told him, “and don’t let your master see it. Then to-morrow morning when you go down to the lake with him to see the nine peafowl slip it out and blow it on the back of his neck. Do this and I’ll give you a golden ducat.”

The serving man took the bellows and did as the old

woman directed. The next morning down at the lake just as the nine peafowl came flying into sight he crept up behind the Prince and blew the bellows on the back of his neck. Instantly sleep overcame the Prince. His eyes closed, his head drooped, and the reins fell from his hands.

Eight of the peafowl alighted on the water's edge, changed into lovely maidens and went bathing in the lake, but the ninth flew straight down to the Prince, fluttered her wings in his face and uttering sad cries tried hard to arouse him.

The eight finished their baths, changed back into birds, and calling their sister they all flew off together. Then and not till then did the Prince awaken.

"Ah!" he cried, "how could I have fallen asleep just when the peafowl appeared? Where are they now? Are they gone?"

"Yes," his man told him, "they're gone. Eight of them changed into lovely maidens and went bathing in the lake but the ninth fluttered about your head and tried in every way to arouse you. I tried to arouse you, too, but you kept on sleeping."

"Strange!" thought the Prince. "How could I have fallen asleep at such a time? I'll have to try again to-morrow morning."

The next morning the same thing happened. The treacherous serving man again blew the bellows on the back of the Prince's neck and instantly the Prince sank into a deep sleep from which the ninth peafowl was unable to arouse him.

As she rose to join her sisters she said to the serving man:

"When your master awakens tell him that to-morrow is the last day we shall come here to bathe in the lake."

The peafowl were no sooner gone than the Prince rubbed his eyes and looked about.

"What! Where are they? Have I been asleep again?"

The serving man pretended to be deeply grieved.

"I tried hard to awaken you, master, but I couldn't. The ninth peafowl as she flew away said to tell you that to-morrow is the last day they'll come to the lake."

The next day as the Prince waited for the appearance of the nine peafowl he galloped madly along the shore of the lake hoping in this way to ward off the strange sleep. But the moment the nine peafowl appeared in the sky he was so delighted that he drew rein and the treacherous serving man was able to slip up behind him and blow the magic bellows on his neck.

So again he slept soundly while the ninth peafowl fluttered about his head and tried vainly to arouse him.

As she was flying away she said to the serving man:

“Tell your master that now he will never find me unless he strikes off the head from the nail.”

When the Prince awoke the serving man delivered this message.

“What can she mean?” the Prince said.

He looked hard at the serving man and something in the fellow’s appearance made him suspect treachery.

“You know more than you’re telling me!” the Prince cried, and taking the cowardly fellow by the throat he shook him and choked him until he had got the truth out of him.

“Ha!” cried the Prince. “Now I understand! You are the nail of which my dear love warns me!”

The fellow whined and begged for mercy but the Prince with one blow of his sword struck off his head. Then, leaving the body where it fell for the old woman to bury, he mounted his horse and again set forth on his quest.

Everywhere he went he made inquiries about the nine enchanted peafowl and everywhere people shook their heads and said they had never heard of them. At last

high up in a wild mountain he found an old hermit who knew all about them.

“Ah,” he said, “you mean the nine princesses. Eight of them have broken the enchantment that held them and are now happily married. The ninth awaits you. She is living in the royal palace of a beautiful city that lies three days’ journey to the north of this mountain. When you find her, if you do just as she says she, too, will soon be free of all enchantment. Then she will be made queen.”

The Prince thanked the hermit and rode on. After three days he came to the city of which the hermit had told him. He made his way to the palace and into the Princess’s presence. Sure enough the Princess was his own dear love. She received him with joy, promised soon to marry him, and gave over to him the keys of the palace.

“You shall now be master here,” she told him, “to go where you like and do as you like. There is only one thing that you must not do, only one place where you must not go. Under the palace are twelve cellars. Here are the keys to them all. Go into eleven of them whenever you will but you must never open the door of the twelfth one. If you do a heavy misfortune may fall upon both of us.”

One day while the Princess was walking in the garden, the young Prince thought he would go through the cellars. So, taking the keys, he unlocked the cellars one after another until he had seen eleven of them. Then he stood before the door of the twelfth wondering why the Princess had warned him not to open it.

“I’ll open it just a little,” he thought to himself. “If there’s something inside that tries to get out, I’ll close it quickly.”

So he took the twelfth key, unlocked the twelfth door, and peeped inside the twelfth cellar. It was empty except for one huge cask with an open bunghole.

“I don’t see anything in here to be afraid of,” he said.

Just then he heard a groan from inside the cask and a voice called out in a begging, whining tone:

“A cup of water, brother! A cup of water! I am dying of thirst!”

Now the Prince thought to himself that it was a terrible thing for any living creature to be dying of thirst. So he hurried out, got a cup of water, and poured it into the open bunghole. Instantly one of the three iron hoops that bound the cask burst asunder and the voice inside the cask said:

“Thank you, brother! Thank you! Now give me another cup! I am dying of thirst!”

So the Prince poured in a second cup and the second iron hoop snapped apart and when the voice still begged for more water he poured in a third cup. The third hoop broke, the staves of the cask fell in, and a horrid dragon sprang out. Before the Prince could move, he had flown through the door of the twelfth cellar into the eleventh cellar, then into the tenth cellar, the ninth cellar, the eighth cellar, the seventh cellar, the sixth, the fifth, the fourth, the third, the second, the first, and so out into the garden. The Prince reached the garden just in time to see the monster overpower the Princess.

“Alas, my dear one, what have you done?” cried the poor Princess as the dragon carried her off. “The enchantment would soon have been broken and I could have married you if only you had not gone into the twelfth cellar!”

Heartbroken at what had happened, the Prince mounted his horse and started off in pursuit of the dragon.

“I must do what I can to rescue my loved one,” he said, “even if it costs me my life.”

He rode many days until he came to the castle of

the dragon. The dragon was out and the Princess received him with tears of joy.

"Come," he said to her, "let us escape before the dragon returns."

The Princess sighed and shook her head.

"How, my loved one, can we escape? The dragon rides a magic horse and however fast we go he will be able to overtake us."

But the Prince insisted that they make the attempt. So she mounted with him and off they went.

When the dragon arrived home and found her gone, he laughed a brutal laugh and said to his horse:

"I suppose that foolish young Prince has been here and is trying to carry her off. Shall we start after them now or wait till we've had our supper?"

"We might as well eat," the horse said, "for we'll overtake them anyway."

So they both ate and then the dragon mounted the magic horse and in no time at all they had overtaken the fugitives.

"I ought to tear you to pieces," the dragon said to the Prince, "but I won't this time because you gave me a cup of water. However, I warn you not to try this foolishness again!"

With that he clutched the poor weeping Princess in his scaly arms and carried her back to the castle.

What was the Prince to do now? He tried to plan some other way of rescuing the Princess but he could think of none. In spite of the dragon's threat he went back the next day and tried the same thing again. Again the dragon overtook him and snatched back the Princess.

"I have spared you one time," he said to the Prince, "and I will spare you this one time more for the sake of the water you gave me. But I warn you if you come again I will tear you to pieces."

But what man worthy the name will accept such a warning when the safety and happiness of his loved one is concerned? The next day while the dragon was out the Prince again returned to the castle.

"It is plain," he said to the Princess, "that we can never escape until we, too, get a magic horse. We must find out where the dragon got his. To-night when he comes home, speak him fair and caress his head and when he is in fine humor ask him about his horse—what kind of a horse it is and where he got it. Then I will come back to-morrow at this same hour and you can tell me."

So that night when the dragon came home the Prin-

cess allowed him to put his head in her lap and she scratched him softly behind the ears and petted him until he was purring like a giant cat.

“Urrh! Urrh! Urrh!” purred the dragon. “How happy we are here, just you and I! What a foolish young man that Prince of yours is to think I’d let him carry you off! Urrh! Urrh! Urrh!”

“Yes,” the Princess agreed, “he is foolish or he would never suppose his horse could outrace yours.”

“Urrh! Urrh!” the dragon purred. “You’re right! He seems to think my horse is an ordinary horse. Why, I got my horse from the Old Woman of the Mountain and the only other horse in the world that can outstrip him is another horse that the Old Woman still has. The Prince would have a hard time getting him!”

The Princess still scratching the dragon behind his ears, just where he loved it most, asked softly:

“Why?”

“Urrh! Urrh! Urrh! Because the Old Woman will never give that horse away until a man comes along who is able to guard for three nights in succession the Old Woman’s mare and foal. Any one who attempts this and fails she kills. But even if a man were to succeed he would never get the right horse for the old

witch would palm off another on him. Urrh! Urrh! Urrh! Oh, that feels good, my dear!”

“How would she do that?” the Princess asked.

“Urrh! Urrh! Urrh! You see she says to every man who undertakes to guard the mare: ‘If you succeed you may have any horse in my stable.’ Then she shows him twelve beautiful stallions with shiny coats, but she doesn’t show him a scrawny miserable looking beast that lies neglected on the dung heap. Yet this is the magic horse and brother to mine.”

Now the Princess knew all she needed to know and the next day when the Prince came she told him what the dragon had said. So the Prince at once set out to find the Old Woman of the Mountain.

He traveled three days over waste places and through strange lands. On the first day as he was riding along the shores of a lake he heard a little voice crying out:

“Help me, brother, help me and—who knows?—some day I may help you!”

The Prince looked down and saw a fish that was floundering on the sand. He dismounted to get the fish and throw it back into the water.

“Take one of my scales,” the fish said. “Then if ever you need my help just rub the scale.”

So the Prince, before he threw the fish into the lake,

scraped off a scale and tied it in a corner of his handkerchief. Then he rode on.

The second day a fox that had been caught in a trap called out to him:

"Help me, brother, help me and—who knows?—some day I may help you!"

The Prince opened the trap and the fox, before it limped away, gave the Prince one of its hairs and said:

"If ever you need me, rub this hair."

The third day he met a raven that had fallen on a thorn and was pinned to the ground.

"Help me, brother, help me!" the raven begged, "and—who knows?—some day I may help you!"

The Prince lifted the raven off the thorn and the raven, before it flew away, gave the Prince one of its feathers saying:

"If ever you need me, rub this feather."

So the Prince reached the house of the Old Woman of the Mountain with the fish's scale, the fox's hair, and the raven's feather each safely tied in a corner of his handkerchief.

The Old Woman of the Mountain was an ugly old witch with a long nose that hooked down and a long chin that hooked up.

"Ha! Ha!" she cackled when she saw the Prince.

"Another one that wants service with the Old Woman, eh?"

"Yes," said the Prince.

"You know the conditions?" the Old Woman said. "Guard my mare and her foal for three nights in succession and you may have any horse in my stable. But if she escapes you, then your head is mine and I'll stick it up there as a warning to other rash young men."

The Old Woman pointed to a high picket fence that surrounded the courtyard. On every picket but one there was a grinning human skull. The Prince looked and the only picket that had no skull called out:

"I want my skull, granny! I want my skull!"

The Old Woman gave a wicked laugh.

"You see," she said, "we were expecting you!"

When night fell the Prince led out the mare and her foal to a grassy meadow. To make sure that she would not escape him, he mounted her. Midnight came and he must have fallen asleep for suddenly he awoke to find himself astride a rail with an empty bridle in his hand. In despair he looked in all directions. At one end of the meadow was a pond.

"She may have gone there to drink," he said to himself.

At the pond he saw a hoofprint.



The Old Woman of the Mountain and the Wonder Horse

"Ah," he thought, "if my fish were here, it could tell me."

He untied the corner of the handkerchief that had the fish scale, rubbed the scale gently, and at once a little voice called out from the water:

"What is it, brother? Can I help you?"

"Can you tell me what has become of the Old Woman's mare and foal?"

"Aye, brother, that I can! She and the foal are turned into fish and are down here in the water hiding amongst us. Strike the water three times with the bridle and say: 'Mare of the Old Woman, come out!' That will bring her!"

The Prince did this. There was a commotion in the water, a big fish and a little fish leaped high in the air, fell on shore, and instantly changed to mare and foal. When morning came the Prince drove them back to the Old Woman.

She grinned and pretended to be pleased but, when she had the mare alone in the stable, the Prince heard her beating the poor creature and saying:

"Why didn't you do as I told you and hide among the fishes?"

"I did," whinnied the mare, "but the fishes are his friends and he found me!"

“To-night,” the Old Woman snarled, “hide among the foxes and this time don’t let him find you! Do you hear me? The foxes!”

The Prince remembered this and the second night when he awoke to find himself again sitting astride a rail and holding an empty bridle in his hand, he untied the second corner of his handkerchief, took out the fox’s hair, and rubbed it gently.

Instantly he heard a little bark and the fox’s voice said:

“What is it, brother? Can I help you?”

“Can you tell me,” the Prince asked, “what has become of the Old Woman’s mare and foal?”

“Aye, brother, that I can! She and the foal are turned into foxes and are over in yonder woods now hiding among my people. Strike the earth three times with the bridle and say: ‘Mare of the Old Woman, come back!’ That will bring her!”

The Prince did this and instantly two foxes, a vixen and a cub, came trotting out of the woods and when they reached the Prince they changed back to mare and foal.

In the morning the Prince drove them home to the Old Woman. As before she grinned and pretended to be pleased but when she had the mare alone in the

stable the Prince heard her giving the poor creature another beating and saying:

“Why didn’t you do as I told you and hide among the foxes?”

“I did,” whinnied the mare, “but the foxes are his friends, too, and he found me!”

“To-night,” the Old Woman ordered, “hide among the ravens and this time don’t let him find you!”

The third night the Prince tried hard to stay awake but sleep again overcame him and when he woke he found himself for the third time sitting astride a rail and holding the empty bridle in his hand. But he remembered the Old Woman’s words and at once opened the third corner of his handkerchief and taking out the raven’s feather rubbed it gently.

There was a flutter of wings and a raven’s hoarse voice said:

“Caw! Caw! What is it, brother? Can I help you?”

“Can you tell me what has become of the Old Woman’s mare and foal?”

“Aye, brother, that I can! She and the foal are turned into ravens and are perched in yonder tall fir tree hiding among my folk. Strike the trunk of the tree three times with your bridle and say: ‘Mare of

the Old Woman, come down!’ That will bring her!”

The Prince went over to the fir tree, struck it three times with the bridle and said:

“Mare of the Old Woman, come down!”

Instantly two ravens, a big one and a fledgling, fluttered to earth and changed to mare and foal. So when morning came the Prince was able to drive them back to the Old Woman and claim his reward.

The Old Woman was angry enough to kill him but she pretended to be pleased and she smiled and grinned and she patted the Prince on the arm and said:

“Aye, my son, but you are a hero! You have won the reward and you are worthy of it. Choose now the finest horse in my stable. It is yours.”

She drove the twelve handsome stallions out into the courtyard and urged them on the Prince one after the other. But at each the Prince shook his head.

“I am only a poor adventurer,” he said. “Such horses as these are too fine for me. Give me rather that poor mangy creature that lies over yonder on the dung heap. That is the one I choose.”

Then the Old Woman fell into an awful rage and shook and chattered and begged the Prince not to take that horse.

"It would shame me," she said, "to have you ride off on that poor beast which is half dead already! No, no, my son, you mustn't take him!"

"But that's the one I'm going to take," the Prince said firmly, "that and none other!" He drew his sword and lifted it threateningly. "I have won whatever horse I choose and now, Old Woman, if you do not keep your bargain I shall strike you dead with this sword and stick up your grinning skull on that empty picket!"

At that the empty picket began to shout:

"I want my skull! I want my skull!"

When the Old Woman of the Mountain saw that the Prince knew what he was about, she gave up trying to deceive him and let him lead off the horse he wanted. So the Prince walked away dragging the poor mangy creature after him. When he was out of sight of the Old Woman's house, he turned to the horse and began rubbing down his rough coat and patting his wobbly legs.

"Now, my beauty," he said, "we'll see what you're made of!"

Under his hand the mangy beast changed to a glorious animal—one of those wonder horses of the olden days that rise on the wind and gallop with the clouds.

Soon his coat shone like burnished gold and his tail and mane streamed out like flames of fire.

"Ah, my master," the horse said, "I have been waiting for you this many a day! We shall have glorious adventures together!"

Then the Prince mounted him and he rose on the wind and went so swiftly that he covered in three minutes all the distance that it had taken the Prince three days to go on an ordinary horse. Whiff! and there they were at the dragon's castle and there was the Princess running out to welcome them.

"Now, my dear one," the Prince said, lifting the Princess up in front of him, "this time the dragon will not overtake us!"

The wonder horse rose on the wind and off they went.

When the dragon got home and found that the Princess had fled again, he said to his horse:

"Shall we follow her at once or shall we eat supper first?"

"It's all one what we do," the horse said, "for we shall never overtake her."

At that the dragon leaped upon his horse and, mounting on the wind, started off in hot pursuit. Presently they caught sight of the other horse carrying the Prince

and the Princess but, try as he would, the dragon's horse could not overtake the other. The dragon beat his horse unmercifully and dug his sharp claws into the horse's tender flanks until the horse in agony called out to the Prince's horse:

"Hold, brother, hold! Let me overtake you or this monster will kill me with his cruelty!"

"Why do you carry such a monster?" the Prince's horse called back. "Throw him from you and be rid of him forever!"

At that the dragon's horse reared suddenly and the dragon, losing his balance, fell and was dashed to pieces on the rocks below.

And that was the end of that dragon!

Then the Princess wept but her tears were tears of joy for she knew now that the enchantment that had bound her was broken forever. Never again would she be changed into a peafowl at the whim of a wicked dragon, never again be separated from her loved one. Presently she mounted the dragon's horse and together she and the Prince returned to the beautiful city. The people came out to meet them and when they heard of the dragon's death a holiday was proclaimed and amidst music and dancing and merrymaking the Princess married the Prince. Then she was made Queen of that

beautiful city and the Prince was made King. They ruled long and wisely and better than that they lived happily for they loved each other.

So now you know the story of the Peafowl who became a Queen and of the Tsar's Youngest Son who married her.



THE WONDERFUL HAIR



The Story of a Poor Man Who Dreamed of an Angel

THE WONDERFUL HAIR

THERE was once a poor man who had so many children that he was at his wit's end how to feed them all and clothe them.

"Unless something turns up soon," he thought to himself, "we shall all starve to death. Poor youngsters—I'm almost tempted to kill them with my own hands to save them from suffering the pangs of hunger!"

That night before he went to sleep he prayed God to give him help. God heard his prayer and sent an angel to him in a dream.

The angel said to him:

"To-morrow morning when you wake, put your hand under your pillow and you will find a mirror, a red handkerchief, and an embroidered scarf. Without saying a word to any one hide these things in your shirt and go out to the woods that lie beyond the third hill from the village. There you will find a brook. Follow it until you come to a beautiful maiden who is bathing in its waters. You will know her from the great masses of golden hair that fall down over her shoulders. She

will speak to you but do you be careful not to answer. If you say a word to her she will be able to bewitch you. She will hold out a comb to you and ask you to comb her hair. Take the comb and do as she asks. Then part her back hair carefully and you will see one hair that is coarser than the others and as red as blood. Wrap this firmly around one of your fingers and jerk it out. Then flee as fast as you can. She will pursue you and each time as she is about to overtake you drop first the embroidered scarf, then the red handkerchief, and last the mirror. If you reach the hill nearest your own village you are safe for she can pursue you no farther. Take good care of the single hair for it is of great value and you can sell it for many golden ducats."

In the morning when the poor man awoke and put his hand under his pillow he found the mirror and the handkerchief and the scarf just as the angel had said he would. So he hid them carefully in his shirt and without telling any one where he was going he went to the woods beyond the third hill from the village. Here he found the brook and followed it until he came to a pool where he saw a lovely maiden bathing.

"Good day to you!" she said politely.

The poor man remembering the angel's warning made no answer.



The Mirror, the Handkerchief, and the Embroidered Scarf

The maiden held out a golden comb.

“Please comb my hair for me, won’t you?”

The man nodded and took the comb. Then he parted the long tresses behind and and searched here and there and everywhere until he found the one hair that was blood-red in color and coarser than the others. He twisted this firmly around his finger, jerked it quickly out, and fled.

“Oh!” cried the maiden. “What are you doing? Give me back my one red hair!”

She jumped to her feet and ran swiftly after him. As she came close to him, he dropped behind him the embroidered scarf. She stooped and picked it up and examined it awhile. Then she saw the man was escaping, so she tossed the scarf aside and again ran after him. This time he dropped the red handkerchief. Its bright color caught the maiden’s eye and she picked it up and lost a few more minutes admiring it while the man raced on. Then the maiden remembered him, threw away the handkerchief, and started off again in pursuit.

This time the man dropped the mirror and the maiden who of course was a Vila and had never seen a mirror before picked it up and looked at it and when she saw the lovely reflection of herself she was so amazed that she kept on looking and looking. She was still

looking in it and still admiring her own beauty when the man reached the third hill beyond which the maiden couldn't follow him.

So the poor man got home with the hair safely wound about his finger.

"It must be of great value," he thought to himself. "I'll take it to the city and offer it for sale there."

So the next day he went to the city and went about offering his wonderful hair to the merchants.

"What's so wonderful about it?" they asked him.

"I don't know, but I do know it's of great value," he told them.

"Well," said one of them, "I'll give you one golden ducat for it."

He was a shrewd buyer and the others hearing his bid of one golden ducat decided that he must know that the hair was of much greater value. So they began to outbid him until the price offered the poor man reached one hundred golden ducats. But the poor man insisted that this was not enough.

"One hundred golden ducats not enough for one red hair!" cried the merchants.

They pretended to be disgusted that any one would refuse such a price for one red hair, but in reality they were all firmly convinced by this time that it was a

magic hair and probably worth any amount of money in the world.

The whole city became excited over the wonderful hair for which all the merchants were bidding and for a time nothing else was talked about. The matter was reported to the Tsar and at once he said that he himself would buy the hair for one thousand golden ducats.

One thousand golden ducats! After that there was no danger of the poor man's many children dying of starvation.

And what do you suppose the Tsar did with the hair? He had it split open very carefully and inside he found a scroll of great importance to mankind for on it were written many wonderful secrets of nature.



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